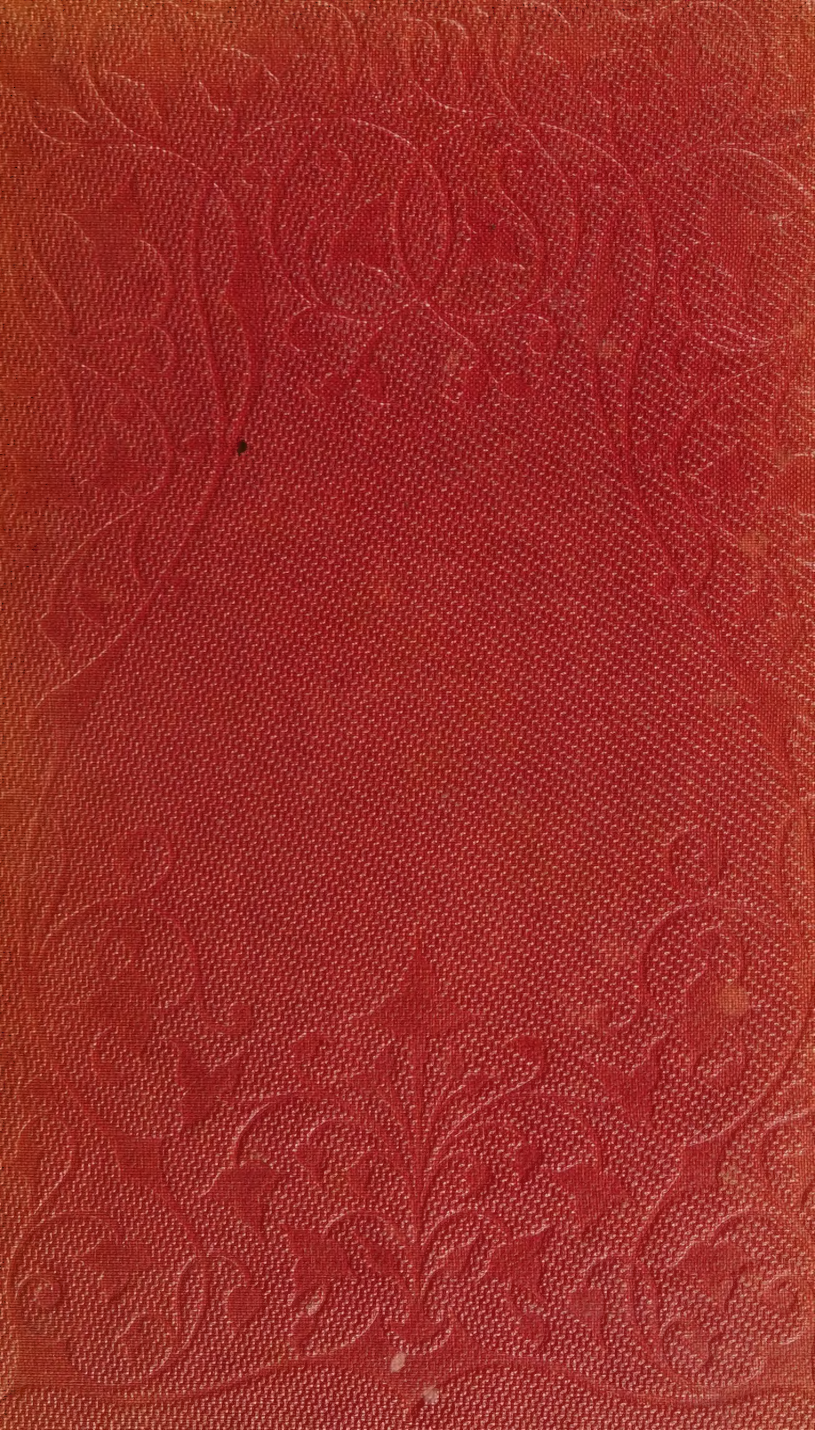






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THE
C R O W N W A R D.

BY ARCHIBALD BOYD,

AUTHOR OF

“THE DUCHESS,” “THE CARDINAL,”

&c., &c.

Nurse. His name is Romeo, and a Montague,
The only son of your great enemy.

Juliet. My only love sprung from my only hate!

ROMEO AND JULIET.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

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THE CROWN WARD.



CHAPTER I.

RETALIATION.

IT can be easily understood how great was the excitement produced upon the two fair occupants of the chamber, by the intelligence of the intended visit. Upon Mary's cheek the colour went and came, rapid as the changes of an April hour, and she unconsciously raised her hand to her left side, as if to still the beatings of the heart that throbbed within.

Lady Beatrice was scarcely less agitated. Less personally interested, she was, it is true. But the intense affection which she entertained for the being beside her, made her contemplate

with the keenest anxiety, an interview which was probably to decide her young friend's fate. That it would not have been requested, unless the Lord Warden had something important to announce, she felt satisfied ; and yet of what character was likely to be the communication. Had he succeeded in obtaining the withdrawal of Bowes' addresses, and if so, by what means had he been able to divert from his purpose, a man so unscrupulous and determined ? Even if he had by some incomprehensible influence, been successful, would the success secure Mary's happiness ?

Upon this, Lady Beatrice meditated long and anxiously. Then came the confession of the of the preceding evening, and it added to the volume of mischances. Mary loved the man she had rejected, and the withdrawal of one admirer was of small avail, unless it were to be followed by the advances of another. Could this be hoped for ? And if not, what would be the probable result upon the happiness of her friend. In any way, the prospect was little satisfactory.

Such were the reveries of the fair daughter of Lord Gowrie. They were interrupted. A small hand passed itself round her neck, and Mary, with flushed cheek, and faltering voice, whispered in the ear of her companion, a wish to leave the chamber. But the question seemed unheard, for it was more than once repeated, ere it was replied to.

To say the truth, answering it was no easy task. It had suggested to Lady Beatrice a new difficulty. Was it best that Mary should be present, or away? The interview, no doubt, from the terms of the communication, was intended to be with her alone; but still Mary's presence — her beauty — chance—anything—nothing—one of those accidents, which so little calculated on, yet so frequently spring up under the sudden influence of many impulses, might bring the lovers to a better understanding. She decided, therefore, that Mary should remain.

Such were the thoughts that occupied her busy brain, when the low, faint voice at her ear,

asked her for the third time, if she had not better withdraw.

“No, my love;” said her companion. “The interview which the Lord Warden now seeks of me, must be about your affairs, and it is right that you, the person most interested, should be present to receive the communication.”

“But the message is addressed to you, and you only.”

“Precisely; because it was I, and I only, who requested Buccleugh’s interference.”

“But—”

“But me no buts,” said her companion, in a gay tone, as she imprinted a kiss on the girl’s cheek. “Do as I would have you; if I am to be your counsellor, you must follow my counsels.”

Mary made no further opposition, but, as if a sudden spirit of industry had come over her, hurriedly picked up her worsted frame, and resumed, with great energy, her attempts at giving a life-like character to the red dragon, with the yellow tail.

Beatrice did not affect to observe her, but leaning back in her chair, once more abandoned herself to her own thoughts.

A quarter of an hour might have elapsed, when a gentle tap was heard at the door, and the Lord Warden entered.

He had evidently expected to find Lady Beatrice alone, and the presence of her companion seemed to produce something like annoyance. He had, however, too much courtly breeding, and in justice to him, it may be added, too much kindly feeling, to allow his dissatisfaction further to display itself; and with the usual formal obeisance of the day, he paid his respects to the fair inmates of the chamber.

By Lady Beatrice, it was immediately and cordially returned; though there was something of irritation mingled with her welcome, for she had anxiously and purposely watched the expression of her visitor as he entered, and read well the momentary frown.

By Mary, the courtesies of Baccleugh had not been so promptly responded to. Upon

her, the opening of the door seemed to have produced no other effect, than that of fixing her attention more exclusively on the worsted, and in inspiring a double devotion towards her Penelope-like labours. In another instant, however, the crimsoned face was raised for a moment, and the bow of the guest hurriedly acknowledged, and once more her eyes concentrated their gaze on the red dragon.

“Well, Lord Warden;” said the Lady Beatrice, in a cheerful tone. “If I read countenances aright, you are no messenger of evil. What tidings bring you?”

“Such, Madam, as you wished. Sir Robert Bowes resigns his pretensions!”

“Impossible!”

“Madam, it is so. I have the honour to present you with a document under his own hand-writing, announcing the fact.”

“Impossible! I say again.”

“And yet, if you consult the paper in your hand, you will learn its truth.”

“Why, Buccleugh, you must be a magician; and yet,” continued she, in a laughing tone,

“if I recollect, you used to disclaim all belief in the black art, and its mysteries.”

“Whether magic had aught to do with it, I know not; but I, at least, am not the sorcerer. Yet, you have heard but half my message. I have still another document for your perusal. Read that.”

“Delightful!” said the Lady Beatrice, as she glanced her eyes over the paper, which bore the signature of the Ambassador, and the royal pair. “A deed of gift of Mary’s Wardship and marriage, empowering her to wed any one whose name may be inserted in the mandate. Oh! Lord Warden, what do we not owe you?”

“To me, Madam, you owe nothing. The praise is due to another.”

“And that other?”

“He will not that his name be mentioned. He has requested, and I have promised, secrecy.”

“It matters not. Whoever has been the agent, it is at your instance he has acted, and to you is due our gratitude. Mary,” conti-

nued she, turning to her companion, "are you dumb, girl? Have you lost words—voice—good feeling—that you do not tell the Lord Warden, how much you hold yourself his debtor?"

Mary made an effort to speak, but the exertion seemed too much for her. Her lips moved, indeed, but if there were any words on them, they found no utterance.

Whatever was the sentiment, Buccleugh believed he read it, and in a cold haughty tone, he turned to Lady Beatrice, and said :

"Madam, I will spare Mistress Ker the pain of her gratitude ; nor is it due to me. If I have any merit in this—if I have done aught that deserves thanks—I have done it for the sake of Lady Beatrice Ruthven, and for none other."

"Yet I am sure it would gratify Mary to have an opportunity of thanking her preserver."

"Madam, it would be small pleasure for Mistress Ker to bestow her thanks, and still less for me to listen to them. It is sufficient for my happiness, that I have been fortunate

enough to realize your wishes, and having done this, I bid you adieu."

He bowed low as he spoke, and turned as if to leave the room.

"You are not going," said Lady Beatrice. "You would not leave us thus suddenly."

"Have you aught else in which I can serve you?"

"No, no; but I would that you heard her thanks."

"In that, Madam, you have already honoured me, and that suffices me."

"But, Walter," said his companion, as she sprang to her feet, as if to arrest his steps.

"Lady Beatrice."

"I would speak with you."

"At a more convenient moment I shall await your orders. For the present, farewell."

The words were spoken with a cold smile, and ere Lady Beatrice could decipher its meaning, or arrest his progress, the Lord Warden had repeated the low and haughty obeisance that had marked his entry, and disappeared.

“God help me !” said she, as with the closing door she sank back on her seat. “He is mad. They are both mad. What folly !” and her eyes kept straining at the portal, as if she retained before her mental vision, her departed guest. But a sudden and heavy pressure on her shoulder, called her thoughts from his misdoings to nearer and dearer objects. The young girl by her side had fainted.

Alas, poor Mary ! She had been loved, and had rejected :—she had been rejected, and loved. And yet is it not the universal law of humanity ? What is Possession, but another name for Indifference ? and what charm is there in the gifts of Heaven, like their being denied ?”

CHAPTER II.

MERRY CARLISLE.

WE must for awhile leave the fair Mary to the care of her kind nurse. There were scenes enacting in another quarter, which were destined to have a more important influence on her fortunes, than even the machinations of the English Ambassador ; and as the historian of the young lady's loves, we hasten to record them.

In the extreme north west of England, and some few miles removed from the Scotch frontier is a low range, bordered upon one side by the river Eden, and on the other, by a smaller stream called the Caldew or Caday. To the northward, and in the immediate neigh-

bourhood of the meeting of the waters, the ridge rises into a lofty natural mound, that towers proudly over the narrow holms, or strips of flat land, which connect it with either river. Nature made the place strong, and it had been early selected as the site of a fortress. As such it had figured in the days of Roman occupation. As such it had been the subject of jealous attention by the kings of the Norman race ; and each succeeding monarch had carefully added to its defences, and strengthened its outworks.

Even in the reign of Elizabeth, when peace prevailed throughout the land, (for the exhaustion of the nobility, by the wars of the Roses, and the strong rule of the house of Tudor, had put an end to the intestine strife, and given the death-blow to the feudal strong-holds, which were its evidence), the Castle of Carlisle was maintained in all its original strength and splendour.

On three sides, the ocean made England invulnerable. On the fourth, only was it threatened with danger, and that was from the Scotch Border. There accordingly the City of

Berwick and the Castles of Norham and Carlisle were kept in a constant state of defence, and were provided with a large and efficient force; requisite not merely to check any hostile attempt upon the part of the neighbouring royalty, but to keep in awe the predatory population of the Marches, who made war on their own account, without any reference to the wishes or the edicts of their Sovereign.

The security of the place—the size of its garrison—the residence of a vice-regal court—the frequent visits of the neighbouring gentry—the cathedral and its dignitaries—the Black Friars and Grey Friars, (prior to the Reformation of the wealthy monasteries of the regular clergy)—all made the town the capital of the north-west counties. The presence of the devout, the great, and the noble, as a matter of course, insured the expenditure of large sums of money. Gaiety and amusement followed in its train, and thus the locality won, for itself, the name by which it was generally distinguished, “Merry Carlisle.”

The Castle, and we must claim permission to

be somewhat minute in our description, was in shape a triangle, and was divided into two courts, called the outer and the inner ward. In the former was the Donjon Tower, a large square building of immense height, and connected with it were numerous minor constructions of different periods and elevations. These, with the Donjon, formed two sides of the triangle. The third rested on the outer ward. From this, however, it was separated by an embattled wall, which independently of a deep fosse that protected its exterior, was defended in the centre by a castellated gateway, provided with draw-bridge, portcullis, and the other securities common to the fortalices of the period.

Over the gateway were the apartments of the Seneschal, or as he was generally termed the Captain of the castle—an admirably selected site, as it was provided with windows alike on the east and west, and thus enabled the high functionary to keep a sharp eye on the movements of his subordinates, in both divisions of his garrison.

To the west of the inner, lay the outer ward, separated from the former, as we have mentioned, by ditch and wall. It was of great extent, and strongly fortified. Within it were the barracks of the soldiery, and at its north west angle, stood a building two stories in height—the prison of the fortress.

The inner ward had but one entrance, that already mentioned. The outer possessed like its companion, a massive and jealously fortified gateway, opening upon the town, but it had besides, a small postern in the centre of the western wall, giving access to the Caday.

It was early morning, on the day preceding that whose events we have related in the last chapter. In the outer ward of the Castle, and immediately in front of the great gate, was a party of light horse. The troopers were dressed in the ordinary costume of Border cavalry—steel bonnets and jacks or coats of plate mail; while their legs were protected by large untanned leather boots, which came up to the middle of the thigh. A spear was in their hand, a long sword at their side, a dagger

at their girdle. Each stood at his horse's head, and their perfect silence bore testimony to the severity of their discipline. Near them a groom led about a charger, whose beauty as well as the richness of its housings, and furniture, marked the rank of its owner. Three young Cavaliers dressed in the rich costume of the period, and evidently prepared for a journey, stood beside their respective steeds, while some dozen more came and went, spectators of the intending travellers.

In the chamber over the great gateway, or the Captain's tower as it was called, and to which we have already alluded, were two men. The one was our old friend Lord Scrope; the other, Thomas Salkeld, Baron of Corby, and by hereditary right, Seneschal of the fortress. The Warden was in buff coat as usual, but the long Spanish boots, and the large spurs intimated that he was about to take the road.

"No, Tom," continued the latter, addressing his Lieutenant, "it must be as I say. That Willie Armstrong is the curse of the Border, and it suits not with my honour, that his mis-

deeds should be longer unpunished. I tell you man, that at Court, they do nothing but jeer about it; the more especially since Cary, last year did March law on Geordie Bourne, and took five of the most noted reivers in Tarras Moss."

"Tut, tut, my Lord. The folks at Court are no judges of such matters. Kinmont Willie may be wild enough, but you cannot make a Banbury man of a Borderer, and Willie is no worse than his neighbours. As to laying hand on him, that I suspect will be no easy matter, for the lad is as slippery as an eel."

"Pshaw! I doubt not but he will be present to-morrow."

"Probably! But your Lordship knows March Law. From sun-rise to sun-rise, either party has full right to come and go."

"Pshaw, Tom! there may be found means to make him forget the hours. A young gallant like that must needs love the wenches, and the wine cup. Have ye no carousers in hall, would challenge him to a bout?"

“Why as to carousing, there is Ralph Ridley, of Haltwhistle, who would drink Eden dry, if you only filled it with Bordeaux; but he has ever his whinger out at the fifth cup, and so—” and Salkeld stopped and shook his head.

“And so his gossips have had their heads so often broken, that they eschew further companionship.”

“Exactly.”

“Try him with a pretty face then. Know you no Dalilahs, who would entrap our Sampson?”

“My Lord, I am too old for these follies.”

“Pshaw! I doubted not your fidelity to the worthy dame at Corby, but the Captain of Carlisle, must have intelligencers abroad, and his spies may have reported such a thing.”

“Nay,” said Salkeld, laughing. “It is my duty to listen to every thing, and I have sometimes heard of the ale-house girl at Kershope-Foot.”

“Ha! ‘Is my hostess of the tavern a most sweet wench,’ as that dulcet rogue Will, hath it? She then must be the *Venus victrix* on the present occasion. Spare not the gold man.

Promise her a kirtle, and a rokelay if she but lime the twig, for this gay young falcon of ours."

"I doubt it. The bird's a rake."

"Pshaw! Never flew hawk yet but stooped to lure, if it were daintily set out."

"Well, be it so. I will see what the kirtle and the rokelay will do for us."

"You must, Tom. You must. The old wives will beat us with their distaffs, if we have him not in cage. I am strong on it."

"And your Lordship's zeal is no doubt enhanced by the loss of the Durham heifers, and the gallant grey."

"Ah, Tom! I could have forgiven the cows from the Bishopric, even though the rascal drove them off from under my windows; but the horse that I sent for all the way to Barbary—that was a sin that passes pardon."

"Well, I'll do my best; though I fear that ill will come of it. There will, I'll warrant, be a sad outcry."

"Tush—man. As our friends on the

other side of the Border would say ‘we’ll jouk and let the jaw gae by.’ ”

“Likely enough, but if I get the gyves on his wrists, what am I to do with him?”

“Keep him in hold till I return. I would not for a King’s ransom, that another judged him.”

“And what, may I enquire, does your Lordship propose to do?”

“Do you ask? Send him to Hairibee. You cannot name me reiver, who ever sang his neck verse there, that was more worthy of it.”

“Well,” said his companion, with a sigh, “if your Lordship will have it, it must be so. But I confess, I am sorry for him.”

“A young villain!”

“May be. But my people tell me, that he’s as gallant a lad as ever put foot in steel stirrup, and I would that the caging of him were assigned to other hands than mine. Could not your Lordship stay, and see after the job yourself?”

“No. Impossible. The rider that came in last night, brought me urgent letters from Lord Hunsdon and Sir Robert, and I must be off to Berwick and Norham. They would see me instantly.”

“And I can guess their business — the arrest of Lord Robert.”

“Ay, no doubt. Essex is in the Tower, and you can well imagine the sorrow of us, his near kinsmen.”

“And go you to Alnwick?”

“No. The wizard Earl holds not with his brother-in-law, and I dare not trust myself with the Lady Dorothy. Her tears might make me promise more than it would be easy or safe to stand to. But the sun is already an hour high in the Heavens, and I must be gone. So remember to-morrow, and Kinmont Willie.”

He left the room as he spoke. As he entered the court-yard, the trumpets blew to horse, and in another minute, the stately pageant was making its way through Carlisle :

and in Castle Street, and in the Market Place, and down English Street, and as far as the Botcher-gate, nodding heads and muttered voices announced that the Lord Warden had gone upon a journey.

CHAPTER III.

THE CAPTURE.

ON the following day, as Lord Scrope had mentioned, took place the March meeting.

Such was the designation given to the Border Courts of Judicature, which, during the continuance of truce between the rival kingdoms, were held under the joint presidency of the English and Scotch Wardens, or their Deputies. These tribunals held their sittings twice a year, and to their cognizance, were submitted all cases of rapt, spulzieing, theft, or other misdemeanours, to which the lawless population, inhabiting the confines of the two kingdoms, were addicted.

But as it was requisite for the ends of justice, that the parties inculpated should have the power personally, or through the evidence of others, to rebut the charges made against them, it had become a matter of usage, that any one, whatever his character or crimes, should be entitled to appear upon the ground appropriated to the solemnity, and depart free, without being detained by the strong arm of the law. The amnesty was understood to extend from the dawn of the day of meeting, till next morning's sunrise. Any delay, however, beyond these hours of grace, exposed the loiterer to capture, and the infliction of whatever penalties might attach to his offences.

It was six in the afternoon. The Court was over. The Deputy Wardens had departed. The crowds which pleasure or business had attracted to the spot, and which, when freed from the surveillance of their superiors, lingered for a while at the drinking booths, or amused themselves in making purchases of the pedlars or other travelling merchants,

ever present at such meetings, had, in their turn, bent their steps homewards; and nought remained behind, save some dozen resolute toppers, who had congregated at the ale house at Kershope-Foot—the only permanent edifice of the wild and solitary locality.

We must conduct our readers to its interior.

In a low back room, half filled with turf smoke, and to which the flitches of bacon, and salt fish suspended from the roof, and casks of liquor that encumbered the floor, gave a joint character of store and cellar, were two persons engaged in conversation.

The elder, who sat by a table in its centre, was a man past middle life, in a sad coloured hose and doublet, and furnished with a ruff and cloak of that voluminous size, which characterized the early part of the reign of Elizabeth. Sword he wore none, but in its place, as if to mark the peacefulness of his profession, was suspended an ink bottle from his button hole, bearing amicable company with a sheath filled with pens and paper.

By his side, stood a buxom black eyed girl, in the gala costume of a peasant on a holiday.

It was Lizzie Laidlaw, the daughter of the host of the mountain tavern, and a guest who had announced himself as a burgess of Carlisle, and who, affecting a horror for the companionship of the brawling swordsmen, that filled the public room, had, as an especial favour, been permitted to eat his slice of sausage and drink his pint of sack, as we, of the present day, should phrase it, behind the bar.

“What! a grand red jupe!” said the girl, in a tone between delight and incredulity.

“Yes, my beauty, a kirtle of scarlet.”

“And a short gown of tilsent?”

“*Item* a boddice of tilsent, with a skirt.”

“And blue hose, said ye?”

“*Item* blue hose, with the clocks worked in silver.”

“And a’ this for me?”

“Why, Lizzie, you may have them all if you will.”

“Ay, but what am I to do for them; for I guess a’ thae fine things will no’ be gi’en me for naething.”

“A thorough legal head,” muttered the person addressed. “Master Attorney himself has not more distinct ideas on the doctrine of equivalents. What are you to do for them, my dear,” continued he aloud, and turning to his companion, “a mere trifle—a nothing.”

“Ay, but what’s that naething ca’ed? What is’t?”

“You know Kinmont Willie.”

“Brawly.”

“He’s an admirer of yours.”

“May be. When ane has scores o’ Joes, ane does na count them.”

“No doubt, no doubt. So pretty a girl must have many admirers, and it would be bad taste on Willie’s part, if he were not of the number.”

“May be, or may no be, but what has that to do with the red jupe.”

“Simply, my dear, you must understand

that I have made a bet, that those eyes of yours have power to do anything."

"Nane o' your fleeching."

"Fact, I assure you. I have done more. I have wagered, in proof of my assertion, that you will persuade Kinmont Willie to stay all night at Kershope-Foot, in spite of Lord Scrope and his merry men."

"If ye have wagered siccan a thing, ye're like to tyne yer siller."

"Why?"

"He's no sic a fool. He's mair than ance been ower near Hairibee a'ready."

"Pshaw? Who thinks of Hairibee? There's no danger for the lad, and I may win my bet, and you your kirtle."

The girl seemed undecided, for she cast her eyes upon the ground, and kept twisting the corner of her apron round one of the fingers.

"It's rael grand—the jupe?" said she at length, in a low tone.

"Positively beautiful," replied the tempter, "but," continued he as he produced a parcel

from the inside of his cloak, "you shall judge for yourself. See here."

As he spoke he opened it, and displayed to view the pieces of female finery already enumerated.

The girl's eyes took in their glories in a moment. They seemed to produce their effect, for the unhappy apron-corner was rolled and unrolled with increasing rapidity, and from time to time a sidelong glance bore fresh evidence to the power of the attraction.

"And what," said she at length, in a low tone, "div ye want me to do?"

"I have betted that those eyes and lips of yours have power enough, as I have said already, to persuade Willie to remain all night at Kershope-Foot, and I would win my bet."

"And ye wad do him nae ill?"

"Me do him ill!" said the notary, with well acted astonishment. "Do I look like the man who would meddle with a Dare-devil like that? I would not come within reach of his fingers for a Jew's ransom."

"And if he stay here a' night, I am to hae

the jupe, and the stockings, and the short gown?"

"Yes, my bud of beauty, and a gold crown into the bargain, to buy you ribbons to set them off properly."

"Weel; ane does na pick jupes aff ilka bush. Sae what am I to do?"

"Give him the stirrup cup before he starts."

"Hout—is that a'? We do that for maist ony ane, gentle or simple, that's weel horsed, and pays his lawing."

"Ay, my dear, but I must mix the bree.

"Ye'll no pushion him?"

"Nothing of the sort, you silly wench. Nothing of the sort, I tell you. So give me a pint of sherris-sack, and some sugar."

The girl hesitated for a moment, but a glance at the finery on the table, seemed to give her resolution, for she proceeded to the cask, drew off the liquor, and presented it to her guest.

The old man poured it into a pipkin, mixed it with sugar, placed it on the fire, and waited

patiently till it boiled. As soon as the bubbles appeared on its surface, he took a small paper from the breast of his doublet, opened it, and when Lizzie's attention was engaged by some of the guests in the public room, poured its contents into the wine. A few turns of the spoon sufficed to mix thoroughly the potion. This done, he placed the pipkin at a little distance from the fire, and leaving it to simmer gently, once more, on her return, addressed his hostess.

"There, wench," said he, pointing to the potion, "is Willie's stirrup cup. But mind you wait till I give you the signal ere you present it. If you see me touch my chin, have it to him at once. If he drink it, the kirtle is yours. And now lass," continued he, "open this door. It suits neither my reputation or yours, that we should be seen colleagu~~ing~~ together."

The girl obeyed. She drew back the bolts of a narrow door that led to the outside, and gave the means of exit to her unknown visitor. As soon as he had passed out she reclosed it, and having given a coquettish glance at a small

looking-glass suspended against the wall, and arranged her ringlets in their most becoming form, entered the public room.

The early night of a November day had already set in, but the gloom without, only gave additional charm to the lightsome character of the interior, where two large iron lamps, and an immense fire, piled with turf and billets, dispensed warmth and brilliancy.

The centre of the chamber was filled by a large and coarsely fashioned table, and around it was assembled a joyous company. At the head, in the place of honour, and occupying an arm-chair—the solitary one in the apartment, for benches and three-legged stools composed the remaining furniture — sat our friend, Kinmont Willie. He was already flushed with liquor, and seemed to surrender himself easily to his present popularity, for guest after guest hobnobbed with him, and each, as he emptied his horn measure of liquor, insisted that the master of the revels should follow his example.

One only of the party seemed averse to join in

the general gaiety. He was about the same age as young Armstrong, and apparently, also from the north side of the Border, for a plaid was passed round his shoulders, and a broad blue bonnet was on his head. From time to time, as the liquor was presented to him, he passed it by, and scanned with an anxious eye each bumper that the young chairman of the party was pouring over his lips. His patience appeared to be at length exhausted, for he started to his feet, and approached the head of the table.

“Willie,” said he, as he seized him by the arm, “ye hae had eneugh, and mair than eneugh already. Its dark now, and we hae ten miles afore us.”

“Hout ! wait a wee,” was the answer.

“Fient a bit will I. Nor, if ye tak my advice, will you. Ere lang ye’ll no be able to keep the saddle, and mind ye, it does na consist with your safety to be fund here the morn.”

“Consist with his safety !” said the jovial crew in chorus. “Why Willie, they would frighten you away.”

“Na, na,” said the inebriated chairman. “He’ll no do that. If he’s chicken-hearted, he may gang hame himsel. I’m no feared for Lord Scrope.”

His companion paid little heed to the remark, but advancing to the chair, laid his strong hand on the moss-trooper’s arm, as if he would have forced him from his seat. With the half-drunken man, the well intentioned violence excited only anger, for, freeing himself by a sudden jerk, Willie struck his young Mentor a violent blow on the chest. For an instant, the Borderer’s eyes flashed fire, his arm was raised, his fist clenched, as if he would have returned it. Suddenly the mood changed. Possibly, the tipsy air of his old playmate had caught his attention, for by a strong effort, he recovered himself, fixed his eye coldly upon his still irritated companion, and having uttered in a low tone, “Gude night to ye Willie Armstrong, and God help ye, for your wits maun be sair gane, to strike your best freend,” he left the room.

In another instant were heard his horse’s

hoofs outside the door, and then they died away in the distance.

Silence for a moment followed his departure. There had been so much of sincerity in the tone in which the words were uttered, as to impress respect even on the half drunken crowd. But the idea was short lived, and in another instant the revellers shouted out in chorus. "He's afraid. He dare not stop here. He's not like you. Kinmont Willie for ever!"

But the young moss-trooper appeared to receive little gratification from the praises lavished on him. For an instant, he lay back in his chair, with the air of one who had been suddenly sobered.

"He said weel," muttered he to himself. "I maun hae been mad to hae struck an auld freend, and warse than mad to keep here, drinking and driving, when I suld be on the ither side of Liddel. So gude man—Yedie Laidlaw—what's your name, tell me my score. I would pay my lawing and be-gane. And bring the red mear round at aince. I'll shake hands wi' Tam Elliot, or he's cross Liddel."

“Ye’re faint hearted too, Willy. Ye’re white in the liver, like Tam.”

“Tam Elliott never feared either man or deil,” was the calm reply. “Nae mair do I, and if ony ane here doubts my word, let him draw.”

A dozen swords flashed from the scabbards on the instant, but the notary who had been the companion of Lizzy Laidlaw, in the early part of the evening, and who unobserved had entered the room, and approached the table, imposed silence on his associates, with voice and glance.

“No, no, my masters,” said he in a tone of authority, “let us have no brawling here. Good companions all of us. So if the young laird of Kinmont wishes to leave, let him go. We will have but one measure more.”

“No’ ae drap for me,” was the rejoinder of the moss-trooper. “I hae had ower muckle a’ready,” and he buckled his horseman’s coat, and strode towards the door.

There was decision in his tone, and the old man saw at a glance, that further

solicitation of his own was hopeless, for he turned towards the girl who was standing by the entrance to the inner room, and with a careless air touched his chin. The signal was obeyed. Lizzy hurriedly retired, and in an instant after reappeared with a jug of mulled wine and a cup.

“Ye hae refused them a’, Willie,” said she as she approached the departing guest, “but ye will no’ refuse me. It is the stirrup cup ye ken, and it wad shame us a’ for ever, if ye were to leave us without tasting that.”

“Ay lass,” said the gallant Borderer, as he took the mug from her hand, “but ye ken how the stirrup cup’s sweetened.”

With the words he passed his arm round her neck, impressed the customary salute on the faintly averted lips, and drank off the liquor at a draught. Scarcely had he swallowed it, when his eyes dimmed, his head drooped, and he sank back passively into his chair.

It was early morning. The sun was just above the horizon. The Borderer still slept heavily. By his side stood the notary, and some half dozen of the revellers of the preceding evening. But there was now no debauch in their faces. With eager looks they watched the unconscious movements of the moss-trooper, and from time to time with bent head listened to his heavy breathing. As for the notary, he raised his eyes at intervals to the sky, as if to mark the increasing day-light. He appeared satisfied at length.

“I take you all to witness,” said he, “that the sun is high in the Heavens, and the time of truce expired. I make formal note of it in my tablets. I have now done my office. It is for you to do yours.”

The permission was instantly acted on. One of the party produced from beneath his mantle a pair of fetters, and attached them to the limbs of the sleeper. At the same moment, another passed a cord around him, and pinioned his arms to his side. A cart

filled with straw, which had been kept in readiness, was summoned to the door. In this was placed the still sleeping moss-trooper, and the whole party mounting their horses left the hostelry.

Some two hours after, the little *cortège* entered the gate of the Castle of Carlisle. It moved across the outer ward, and stopped near its north-west angle. There Willie was placed once more upon his feet. He slept no longer. The fresh air of the morning, had, to a certain extent, dispelled the effects of the potion; but the drug had been so powerful, that even now he could scarce recognise the full extent of his misfortune. Little time, however, was given him to collect his senses. As rapidly as his manacled limbs would permit, was he conducted up the steps that led to the summit of the rampart that coated the outer wall. He traversed its length, till he reached the low square tower that formed the north-west extremity of the court-yard. There the iron gate that connected its first

floor with the earthen platform, was opened, and the gaolers and the prisoner entered. They passed through the guard-room, and gained the chamber beyond it. A trap-door in the centre of its floor was raised, the arms of the prisoner unpinioned, and a rope passed beneath them. Willie was then let down into the dark abyss below, and the Sampson of the Border was a captive in the hands of the Philistines.

CHAPTER IV.

THE PRISON.

Two nights had passed since Willie had been consigned to his dungeon. So, at least, he learned from his gaolers, for there was nothing in the unwindowed and unlighted room to enable him to mark the transition between darkness and sunshine, and the only thing that served to divert his attention from his sorrows, was the occasional blast of the trumpets in the outer court, or the appearance of his guardians with his morning and evening meals.

On the third day, however, the monotony of his life was destined to be broken. About an hour before mid-day, Willie was conscious,

by the dull echoes over head, of the presence of several persons in the room above, and immediately after, the creaking of the hinges intimated an intention to raise the trap-door.

“They’re come to tak’ me to the Warden,” muttered he to himself, “and the sooner the better, for living in this black hole gars a man feel unco like a brock.”

While he yet spoke, the stone was removed, and a strong rope with a noose on it let down. This, Willie was directed to pass under his arms. The undaunted Borderer obeyed without hesitation, and in a few minutes, was drawn to the surface. He was then informed that his presence was required in an adjoining chamber, and thither he proceeded as fast as the heavy chain which connected his ancles enabled him. The door opened, but there was no Lord Warden expecting his appearance. In one corner sat a woman with her head buried in her hands. The features were carefully concealed, but the white hair, the formal,

yet carefully arranged dress, the dignity of demeanour and a certain haughtiness of bearing, that not even sorrow could break down—all told him at a glance, that he looked on his grand-mother.

It was indeed Euphame. The news of the capture of the young moss-trooper, had of course spread like lightning over the Border districts, and, as elsewhere, found its way into Liddesdale. At first, there had been some hesitation upon the part of the domestics in informing the old Lady—partly from delicacy, as her intense affection for her descendant was well known, and partly from the awe with which all connected with Euphame regarded her, and which made them fear the results of such a communication, upon a temper so irritable, and so haughty.

After much consultation, however, it was decided that as the intelligence must eventually be known, the sooner it was conveyed to her the better, and Euphame learned the fate of her grand-child.

Whatever were her feelings, there was little

exhibition of them on the surface, for it was only a slight tremulousness in the voice, which desired the withdrawal of her domestics, and a wish to be left alone, that spoke of the internal struggle. In about an hour her grieve, or overseer, Sandy Muirhead, was summoned to her presence, and instructions were given to prepare for her departure for Carlisle, on the following morning. Accordingly, half an hour before day-break, the old lady was seated on a pillion behind her faithful retainer, and after about six hours travelling, arrived at her destination.

Euphame was well known in Carlisle. Her stately figure—her high bred manners—her blood relationship to the Kers of Cessford—her connexion with the gallant, though misguided lad, now a prisoner, made her an object of interest. No sooner, therefore, had she arrived at the inn, than host and hostess hurried to the door to express, by personal attendance and grave demeanour, their sympathy. Euphame replied but little, and having instructed her attendant to care specially for the comforts of

the animal they rode, and to hold himself ready for departure at a moment's warning, she made her way on foot to the Castle, and demanded to speak with the prisoner.

The request was instantly conceded. The Captain, as Salkeld was termed, had entrapped his young foeman, rather in obedience to the orders of his chief, than from any inclination of his own to the treachery, and he now readily gave his assent to the desired interview, as a mode of arranging matters with his own conscience. Euphame accordingly met with no difficulties. The prison doors opened on her appearance, and the assiduous and respectful manners of the gaolers, gave evidence of their anxiety to fulfil the wishes of their master.

The old lady was accordingly conducted to a room immediately adjoining that, from which opened Willie's dungeon, and took her place in the chair offered her. Up to this time, she had borne herself proudly—lip had not quivered—limb had not bent—there was no faltering of the voice—no feebleness in the eye—the body sat erect—the head was carried loftily. They

only, who love to analyse human nature in its struggles, might have observed that the fingers from time to time grasped convulsively the arms of the chair. Even that might have been but fancy, but beyond that there was no evidence of internal suffering. It was only when the clank of Willie's chain came upon the ear, that there passed over the face a spasm, and the clasp of the thin hands became rigid. It might be that the cheek was paler—the teeth compressed more firmly—the glance of the eye more set—but Euphame sat still erect and firm.

Willie entered the room. He had been in it a minute, and yet neither by look nor word did she recognise his presence. The gaolers had lingered, possibly in the hope of seeing that proud heart betray its weakness. If so, they were disappointed. Euphame made no sign. All at once the men apparently became conscious that, at such a moment, their presence was an intrusion, for their chief unbonneted and approached his aged guest.

“Lady Kinmont,” said he, in tones of great respect, “its the Captain's orders that you

should be left alone with your grandson. When you wish to leave, you will please to rap at the door."

With the words, he and his subordinates departed, the door closed after them, its heavy bolts were drawn on the outside, and Euphame and Willie were left alone.

It was then that for the first time the old woman raised her eyes from the floor, and turning slowly round fixed them on her grandson. The look was not avoided. On the contrary, the young Borderer returned the gaze of his ancestress with a glance as calm and haughty as her own. It was strange to look on them. The one with wrinkled forehead, and furrowed cheek, and blanched hair; and the other in all the strength of his young beauty, with bent brow, and auburn ringlets clustering over temple and neck. How different—and yet how like! To both the same short curled haughty lip, to both the same light blue fearless eye, to both the same chiselled nostril, and that indescribable bearing which marks a confidence in self-energy, which evil fortune may overwhelm, but cannot break."

A minute might have thus elapsed, and still the one gazed on the other, as statue-like and motionless as the granite effigies in the palaces of the old Egyptian Kings. Silence was broken by Euphame.

“Willie Armstrong,” said she, in a low but firm voice. “Is it here, and thus, I find you?”

There was no reply.

“Unhappy boy,” continued she. “Why do you not answer me?”

“And what’s the gude o’ answering,” was the reply made in a gay laughing tone, “when ye see me here yoursel’.”

“So hardened—so shameless, Willie; but I might have expected it. How often have I prophesied to you this fate?”

“Hout, gude wife, what wad ye hae? Put a pleugh’s paidle in my hand?”

“It would have been a safer life.”

“No ane to suit me, ony how; I like better to couch spear and back steed.”

“And how is this riding of yours to end? With the wooden horse at Hairibee.”

"Like eneugh. But I'm something o' the thought o' the auld Douglasses. I would rather hear the lark sing, than the mouse squeak—rather die at Hairibee in the light of heaven, than at hame like a mangy tyke in the strae."

"And can you speak thus lightly of so dreadful a fate?"

"What's dreadfu' about it?" said the stout hearted moss-trooper. "Was there ever ane o' the house of Kinmont that dee'd in his bed? And if death maun come, what odds is't, if it come frae the stroke o' a lance, or the tail o' a tow."

"And yet," said the old woman, so engrossed with her own thoughts, that she was scarce conscious of the reply of her grandson, "I cannot believe you in peril. You were taken during a time of truce."

"Na, na! the sun had been up an hour when they grippit me."

"But the keeping you in the ale-house, was a snare, a trick, a settled plan of treachery. Lord Scrope is an evil man, and a traitor."

"Ca' him what ye like, granny," was the

unconcerned reply, "but if you misca'ed him till Doom's day, I doubt if your flyting wad draw bolt, or open door."

"But this is a matter in which others are interested besides Lord Scrope. The laws of a powerful kingdom have been violated. King James must hear of it."

"Nae doubt, and right glad will he be to do sae. He owes me a day in har'st."

"How?"

"He kenned that when Bothwell made the Raid of Falkland, I was wi' him."

"But you got a free pardon."

"Nae doubt, but I suspect that King's memories are stronger for evil, than Acts of Parliament for good."

"You think then that King James would make no effort to save you?"

"I think that the blithest news ye could gie him, wad be to tell him o' my hanging."

"But Lord Scrope?"

"Ah! he was na at Falkland. But if I did na herry him, I herried his beasts."

"These unfortunate cattle from the Soceries."

“Na, na! he might hae excused my lifting the Durham heifers frae the Castle mains. It was the slipping the tether ower the head of the gallant grey, that angered him.”

“And how know ye this?”

“Ou! ane of the keepers, Christy Græme, frae the Debateable land, is an auld acquaintance o’ mine. He’s kind and neighbourly, and he tells me I’m sure to be hanged.”

“Why! Because the Warden is irritated by the loss of his horses?”

“Just that.”

“And yet if he were thus angry, why is your fate not already decided?”

“Because Lord Scrope has gane to Berwick, and I’m keepit here till he come back. He taks on sae about the barb, that he intends to doom me himsel’.”

“God help me, Willie!” said the old woman, wringing her hands, “and when does he return?”

“Christy Græme says in a week the morn.”

“And then, my child, would he put you instantly to death?”

“Na, na! The Captain let out that he speaks o’ making my fate a terror to evil doers, as he ca’s it, and a special March Court is to be haudden the day after, for the purpose o’ trying me.”

“And if they find you guilty?”

“There’s nae *if* in the case. The Warden’s determined on’t. He was first for gieing me Jeddart justice—hanging me the day I was ta’en, and trying me when he came back; but on second thought, to mak’ the thing more formal, he’s resolved to try me first, and hang me after.”

“And if he does pronounce you guilty, when—” and Euphame stopped suddenly.

“When would be the day of doom, ye wad say. The morning after. The mair by token that the day’s a Friday, and they thought it the better suited for sic work.”

“And how know you all this?”

“Ou! just frae Christy Græme.”

“For ten days then,” said Euphame, drawing a long sigh, “you are safe.”

“It may be sae. But the thing’s no the

less certain for a' that, and if I am to dee, I had as soon it war the morn. Ye canna think what a dull place that black hole is, and unco could too."

"Still," said the old woman, "while there is life, there is hope."

"Its a grand proverb, and there are some folks that hae faith in proverbs, but I'm no ane o' them. I'm ruined stook and roop."

There was silence for some minutes. Euphame's courage seemed to be deserting her, for shadow after shadow passed over her expressive features.

"And is there none," said she, at length, "who could save you from this dreadful fate?"

"Ou—ay! there's ane."

"And who is he," said the old woman, raising herself eagerly from her half recumbent position. "Tell me his name, that on my bended knees, I may beg of him for mercy. His name, I say?"

"Buccleugh."

"Buccleugh!" repeated the old woman, in accents of undisguised astonishment.

“Ou—ay! just the Lord Warden.”

“Oh!” said Euphame, clasping her hands,
“I could never beg a favour of him.”

“Maybe! naebody asks ye.”

“But you must be in error. The Baron of Branksome, with his ribands and laces, is but a popinjay.”

“Ribands and laces, if ye like, but for a’ his mealy mou,’ when his blood’s up, there’s nae sic devil incarnate ever couched lance, or drew brand.”

“And think you that he could save you?”

“Guid kens, but if ony ane could, he’s the man.”

“And would he?”

“That’s anither maitter. I could na’ expeck it.”

“Why?”

“There’s ae reason. He perils life and lands, by meddling wi’ the job. Ye maun recollect that when Sir John Carmichael interfered with some of thae Southerners, though he had right on his side, the Queen of England demanded that he should be delivered up to her, and that

puir white-livered creature, King Jamie, surrendered him. Be assured that siccan a fate wad await Buccleugh."

"But beyond putting him in ward for a while, the Queen of England harmed not Carmichael, nor might she the Lord Warden."

"Ay, but there would be other reasons."

"And what are they?"

"Guid be wi' us, gude wife, div ye ask? Is it no the clash o' the kintra side, that ye hae been Buccleugh's bitter enemy. Ay," continued he in a meaning tone, "in matters which folk like least to hae eddled wi'."

"And have I not cause?" said Euphame, and her eyes flashed fire, as if the sudden recollection of her feudal hate had for the moment made her forget the perils of her descendant. "Have I not cause, I say? Has not the hand of his accursed race been heavy on us? Have not husband, son, died beneath their swords?"

"Nae doubt, gude wife, but if there has been bluid on their hands, there is bluid also on our's. Its weel kenned that your father was the man that dealt the mortal blow at Edinburgh to

auld Sir Walter, the Warden's grandsire ;—and though it war my forbear's doing, I'll say this for't, that the sun that shone bright at Lockerby, looked na' on a blacker deed, than the torches that flared in the Horse Wynd at midnight. Na—na ! if we hae lost kinsfolk, so hae they. So let by-ganes be by-ganes."

"And would you, dishonoured boy, not glory in the ruin of your race's enemy?"

"Fient a bit I. Set me face to face wi' a man, and my whinger is as ready out o' the sheath as ony anes, but I see nae good o' thinking o't after, or bearing ill will, mair especially to them, wha had nae mair to do wi' the maitter in hand, than I hae to do wi' Dunse Law."

"And yet great spirits have rejoiced over the fall of their father's foe."

"Then, by that same token, Buccleugh should rejoice over mine, for I'm sune like to fash him nae mair."

The remark seemed to startle Euphame, as if the principle of vengeance were not so pleasant in its converse, and for some minutes she sat

silent. Suddenly she started, as if a new thought had come across her.

"Fool that I am," muttered she to herself. "I am wasting the hours here, and each moment is precious. Willie," continued she in a voice that for the first time faltered, "answer me again, and distinctly, for my poor old brains are failing me I think, when say you Lord Scrope returns?"

"I telled ye. In aught days, the morn."

"And the trial?"

"Is fixed for Thursday."

"And the—" and the old woman once more paused, as if unable to give articulation to the thought.

"I'm to be dealt with on Friday at sun-rise."

"Now mark me well, Willie. Is this certain? Are you well assured of it?"

"Certain. Christy Græme heard it from the Captain's ain mouth."

"And if before that time help could be had, you might yet be saved?"

"Nae doubt—but you might just as weel save yerself the fash o' seeking for't, for Buc-

cleugh winna stir, and there's nae chance o' an angel o' light takin' me on his back, na fleeing awa' wi me. And I see na how I could get out else, for a man might as weel think to ding down Tantallon, or big a brig to the Bass, as to break hold out o' the Castle o' Carlisle."

"Well, well, we'll see—we'll see. I must to the King."

"A puir creature—if that's a' ye hae to trust to. He's as fusionless as a docken. But ye're thinking o' ganging," said he, as he observed the old woman putting on her gloves and arranging her dress. "Ye're ganging," repeated the stout Borderer, as his voice faltered a little, and something like a tear started to his eye; "and now before ye gae, gie me your blessing," and the young man knelt at the old woman's feet.

Euphame had hitherto carried herself well; but this act of her grandson seemed to have dissipated, in a moment, the dreams which had been floating across her brain, and which probably whispered of future happiness, for her firmness suddenly deserted her, and she flung

her arms round the lad's neck, pressing him convulsively to her bosom, and exclaiming in low muttered accents, "My bairn, my bairn! would to God that I could have died for you, my bairn—my bairn!"

Her sorrow seemed to affect the young Borderer, even more than his own approaching fate, for the tears coursed down his cheeks, and with a warmth of affection, which pride had hitherto succeeded in concealing, he returned the caress.

"Granmither," said he, at length, "it's no like we'll ever meet again. This world is wearing fast awa' frae me, and ere I leave it, there's something I wad say to ye. Ye are an awesome woman, and I kenna how, but some way even your nearest and dearest hae never daured speak to ye. But when ane is deeing, there are mony things which daunted us in life, that daunt us nae langer, and sae I'll out wi't. Ye hae set my foster-sister against the young Laird of Branksome, and in this ye have done ill, for he is a good lad, and loes her weel, and if ye wad hae me dee wi' something like a licht at

my heart, ye'll promise me that ye'll no do so nae mair. For the Lord Warden was ay kind to me; and at Lockerby, when they wad hae ta'en my life, he wad na let them touch me, for he said it wad be a shame to fash sic a bairn. So think o' this, and may the day come, when your having done a kind act for the sake o' him that's awa', will be mair pleasing to ye, than if ye had a' the Scotts frae Merse to Solway moored in Tarras moss."

With the words, he once more pressed his aged parent tenderly in his arms, kissed her on lip, and cheek, and brow, and then, ere she was aware of his purpose, started to his feet, and passing into the apartment, through which lay the access to his dungeon, closed the door.

For about a minute, Euphame remained stupified, as if from the influence of contending emotions. She then carefully wiped the traces of tears from her eyes, resumed her usual cold and haughty bearing, and with a grave formal step, made her way to the outer door.

She rapped. It was instantly opened. With a slight inclination of the head, but without uttering a word, she passed on, and proceeding straight to the inn, at which she had alighted, gave orders to her attendant for immediate departure.

It was in vain that the kind host and his wife, shocked by the death-like appearance of her features, pressed on her refreshments. It was in vain, that they called her attention to the threatening appearance of the sky. Delay she would not hear of. Food she would not taste. "It would choke me," muttered she to herself, "if I ate bread or drank wine in this place."

In a minute, the horse was at the door. With a proud and composed step, she mounted the stone bench, at that time attached to every inn, for the convenience of travellers, and took her seat upon the pillion; and with a calm and haughty air too, did she return the adieus of the Master and Mistress of the hostelry, and commence her homeward journey.

For some time, not a word was uttered. Euphame's heart was like to burst, and her attendant's sympathy prevented his asking questions. They passed under the Ricker Gate, crossed the bridge, and gained the top of the opposite hill. From that spot, could be obtained the last view of the Border strong - hold, and there the old woman bade her domestic check his horse. There is no fairer scene on earth, than that which met her gaze. The broad river, and the many arched bridge, and the frowning keep, and the walled city, and the flying buttresses of the Cathedral, and the towers of the old Abbeys, and glade and forest—all stood out in bold relief beneath the rays of the setting sun. Euphame marked them not. Her eyes, like those of a fascinated bird, were riveted on one spot—the low square tower that held within its dungeons the last of her race.

In the meantime, the symptoms of an approaching storm had become evident. The clouds, which the host had pointed

out in the distance, under the influence of a south-west gale, had come up with hurricane speed, and, quick as thought, threw a veil over the bright landscape. It might be that the sudden change from fair to foul, on the face of nature, struck some secret chord in the old woman's heart, for she clasped her hands in the attitude of prayer, and bowed her head.

"I have sinned," muttered she to herself, in a low faint tone, "Willie spoke true. I have done evil in separating young affections, and perpetuating a hate that should have been forgotten. And the transgressions of the parent have been visited on the children, for it is through me that that boy must die. Yes! I have sinned. O God! pardon me in this thing."

At that moment, the dark masses which were advancing from the westward, torn asunder by some fitful gust, suddenly opened; and the sun, streaming through them in all its splendour, tinted with gold, bridge and river, tower and town. But,

most of all, did his beams rest on the old feudal stronghold; and prison, and donjon-keep forgot their gloom to bask in the welcome blaze.

The change was not unnoted. To Euphame's superstitious spirit, it seemed a message direct from Heaven.

"I accept the promise," said she, "and, O God! I thank thee for it. And now Sandy," continued she, turning to her attendant, "on wi' ye, and as fast as may be, for there's life depending on your speed."

The man obeyed, and they proceeded at a hurried pace—as rapidly, at least, as the fierceness of the tempest permitted—but though the lightning darted across the sky, and the wind roared, and the large drops fell heavily, Euphame was unconscious of the war of the elements. Her heart, her feelings, her thoughts, were wrapt up in one object; and the only words that fell from her lips, were to urge her domestic, and chide him for the tardiness of his dripping steed.

CHAPTER V.

COUNTRY NEWS AT COURT.

ON the evening of the day, the events of which we have now recorded, a courier reached Linlithgow, conveying to the Lord Warden, the news of the capture of Kinmont Willie, and asking for instructions. "It was notorious," so said Scott of Haining, the official who represented Buccleugh in his absence, "that the lad had been decoyed into the ale house, and kept there through the artifices of Lizzy Laidlaw, till after the hour at which the truce expired, for the express purpose of ensuring his capture; and he added that according to his interpretation of March Law, the English officials were not entitled to take advantage of a lâches, which

was the result of their own act. He said, moreover, that he had already sent to the Constable to demand the surrender of his prisoner, and that he should, on the following day, acquaint his Chief with his success or failure."

On the next evening, accordingly, came fresh dispatches from the Deputy Warden. They were not satisfactory. Salkeld, the Constable of the Castle, announced the absence of Lord Scrope, and till he had communicated with his Chief, refused to give up the moss-trooper. Furthermore, he expressed his opinion that by the strict letter of Border Law, the capture was a legal one. Willie had remained of his own free will upon English ground, till after the expiry of the truce, and must be amenable for the consequence of his indiscretion.

All this, as may be well supposed, was sadly embarrassing to Buccleugh. He considered the seizure an insult to his personal dignity, for it was in fact an hostile act, directed by Lord Scrope against his brother official, on the Scotch side of the Border. In former years, and under

former sovereigns, his line of conduct would, under such circumstances, have been easy. The refusal to surrender the prisoner, would have been followed by a summons to raise the vassals of the great nobles, whose estates lay near the Scotch frontier, and Buccleugh himself, at the head of the united force, would have made an inroad into England in what was termed a Warden Raid.

Things, however, were now changed. The temper of James had done much to introduce a more pacific policy. What had done still more, was the anxiety of the King to secure the English succession. James's shrewdness had not failed to note that nothing was more likely, not only to irritate Elizabeth, but to create feelings of aversion on the part of her subjects, than those forays, in which the marauding population of the frontier so much delighted; and he had taxed to the utmost what little energy he possessed, to prevent their recurrence; had passed edicts, threatening any breach of the Border Laws, with pains of death; and what was stranger still, had pitilessly ordained their

enforcement. Buccleugh was thus aware that any attempt to induce James to take up the matter, would probably be a hopeless one. He felt, however, that in an affair of such importance, it would be dishonourable to himself and his office; to leave the insult unnoticed; while at the same time, to take any overt steps without the permission of his Sovereign, seemed impossible. He resolved, therefore, to demand an audience of the King.

There was another reason for this. Buccleugh liked the young Borderer. He had, on several occasions, been brought into contact with him at hunting parties, or in some of those wild sports that formed the amusement of the inhabitants of the March districts, and although words had scarce passed between them, yet he had felt for the moss-trooper a liking, which had surprised even himself. How far, independently of his own personal good qualities, the well known relationship of the lad to Mary, might have lent their aid in calling into existence the sympathies of the Lord Warden, is a matter which I shall leave my fair readers to decide.

With feelings thus various in their hue, Buccleugh sought the presence of James—stated the information he had received, and asked orders.

They were given without hesitation, and were distinct enough. The King forbade interference. It was in vain that Buccleugh pressed upon his notice the youth of the prisoner, and the mode in which he had been entrapped. Neither plea seemed to have any weight with the royalty of Scotland. With regard to the first, he remarked, that the youth of Kinmont Willie had not prevented his holding Bothwell's horse at Falkland: and, as to the second, he expressed an utter contempt for any man who could be made the victim of female blandishments, and moreover, gave it as his opinion, fortified by sundry quotations from the Proverbs—that any punishment, however severe, was not too heavy for so extravagant a folly. He forbade, therefore, the Lord Warden to take steps in the matter, or to interfere in any way, adding with a bitterness which showed clearly enough, that poor Willie's offences against the Royal person had not been

forgotten, that if one half of the Borderers were condemned to a similar fate, it would be better for the peace of both kingdoms. Buccleugh had nothing for it, therefore, but to bow obedience to instructions so peremptory, and return to his quarters with something like a sigh on his lip, and a tear in his eye.

There were others in Linlithgow, whom the catastrophe had filled with a still deeper dismay. The news had, of course, circulated rapidly through the little town, and amongst others, found their way to Mary's ear. "Fostering," as it was called, was, at the time of which we write, universal in Scotland, and the tie was considered little less sacred between the parties, than relationship by birth and blood. Willie was Mary's foster-brother, nursed by the same mother, brought up under the same roof, a sharer of the same sports in infancy. The affection of early years had increased with time. The chivalrous bearing of the lad, his great beauty, his daring courage, his success in all manly exercises; and most of all, his ever constant, though respectful attention to herself, had

all won upon the heart and affections of the young heiress.

Nor did Willie's occasional misdeeds, lessen the liking. Every age has a morality of its own. Mary had been brought up amid scenes of bloodshed. She had heard them made the subjects of daily conversation. And young Kinmont's passion for getting into difficulties, and extricating himself from them by deeds of desperate hardihood, were to his foster-sister only proofs of his adventurous nature. Not even his cattle stealing propensities could shake her admiration. For three-hundred years, the Border Barons had been in the habit of making inroads into England, with the purpose, as the phrase went, of "seeking a prey," and she could not draw a distinction between the morality of the enterprises of a numerous band, and those of a single individual.

There was no incident, therefore, in Willie's adventurous life, which had ever brought the blush of shame upon her cheek; her affection for him had been thus unswerving, and she now heard of his misfortune with the deepest sorrow.

Yet even the bitterness of her own feelings became as secondary, when she reflected on those of Euphame. Strong as was her nurse's love for herself, she knew well that the old woman's affection for her only descendant, was still stronger. "What will be her affliction," thought Mary to herself, "when she hears of the calamity? What will she say or do, or think? Or how will that proud spirit, which has hitherto carried itself so stoutly amid the misfortunes of those nearest and dearest to her, bear up under the present sorrow?" Doubtful how to act, or what to do, she was about to despatch a courier to her nurse, when his mission was rendered unnecessary. On Monday forenoon, Euphame herself arrived at Linlithgow.

The old woman, on leaving Carlisle, had proceeded direct to her own home. The distance was considerable, but a ride of ten miles brought her within the limits of a friendly people, and a friendly kingdom, and once there, relays of fresh horses were eagerly provided by the affectionate zeal of neighbours or kinsmen. She reached Kinmont about midnight, and

retired at once to her chamber, but not to rest. The sun rose, as he had set, upon her sleepless eye-lids.

She announced, nevertheless, her intention of going to Linlithgow to see the King, and gave orders for immediate departure. But the resolution was obstinately contested by Sandy Muirhead.

“Na, na ! Mistress,” said her faithful Major-domo. “Ye’ll do nae thing o’ the sort. Ye’re no fit to tak the road the day. If gang ye must, and I say naething against it—ye maun e’en stop till the morning.”

In accents, whose faintness contrasted strangely with her usual decided tone, Euphame would have combated his opposition, but in vain.

“Na, it’s no losing time either,” continued Sandy, in reply to the remark of his mistress, “for I’ll send on Will Laidlaw wi’ the galloway. He’s a douce man, and weel to be trusted, and he’ll hae horses for us a’ the gait, as far as Lithgae. On this side Tweed, we’ll get them for love or friendship, and ayont it, siller, and ye mauna grudge it, will hire us what’s needfu’.

So tak a mouthfu' o' something, and then to bed. There's Maggy Brown will brander ye a howtowdy in nae time, and she's weel kenned to be as guid a hand at that wark as ony in the King's kitchen ; and the morn we'll be aff at the dawnin', and God willing will be in Lithgae on Monday."

Euphame submitted, moved probably less by the argument, than by her own feebleness, and after making an effort to eat some of the food which had been prepared for her, retired to rest.

On the following morning, at day-break, she was once more mounted on her pillion, and by the aid of her faithful domestic, and the horses which her *avant courier* had prepared for her, succeeded in reaching Linlithgow on Monday, at mid-day, and instantly proceeded to the Palace and the apartments of Mary Ker.

She found there little consolation. It was already known in the town, that Buccleugh had applied to the King for permission to exert himself in young Kinmont's favour, and had been refused. Euphame was not discouraged.

Through David Moyse, an old acquaintance, and, as folks whispered, an admirer in the days of her youth, she applied for an audience with the King. The request was unsuccessful. Easily swayed in every thing, which merely affected the happiness or the fortunes of others, James was as unbending as adamant in anything that interfered with his own selfishness. It was in vain that his attendant, under the influence of his better feelings, or the recollection, of the past, endeavoured to press upon his Majesty, the propriety of listening at least to the old woman's tale. James denied the petition, and in a tone which satisfied the astute gentleman-usher, that even his influence might be risked by pressing the point. He was obliged consequently to refrain.

With a delicacy which could little have been expected from his usual cynicism, he informed his aged acquaintance of the unsuccessful issue of her suit, and Euphame was once more left to consult with her foster-child, upon the mode best calculated to effect her object.

It was while thus discussing it, that there

arose to her mind the recollection of what her grandson had said with regard to Buccleugh. The expression is an incorrect one, for she had never forgotten it; but her pride had hitherto recoiled from asking aid of such an ally. Now, however, when all others seemed to have failed her, she reluctantly determined upon adopting Willie's suggestion, and seeking the interference of the Lord Warden.

Still, the internal struggle, though struggle there was, was less than might have been expected. The scene in the prison had given a shock to her pride, but most of all (such were the superstitious feelings of the period,) was she affected by the recollection of that burst of light which she had seen from Stanwix Hill break so suddenly through the darkened clouds, and gild with its setting beams the prison of her child. Coming, as it did, immediately after her prayers, it seemed to her as a promise from God. And now with a humbled spirit, she prepared to seek the help of one whom she had so long held as her bitterest enemy

She accordingly once more summoned David Moyse, and sent him to the Lord Warden to solicit an interview.

The usher's second mission was destined to be as unsuccessful as his first.

It was in vain that the old man became eloquent in the cause. It was in vain that he endeavoured to soften Buccleugh's heart, by alternate descriptions of Euphame's despair, and laudations of the young moss-trooper—a species of hero, for whom, in his calmer moments, David entertained as sincere a horror as his master. It was all to no purpose. The discomfited ambassador was compelled to return, and announce to his sorrowing employer the evil issue of his suit.

The blow was a heavy one to Euphame, for she had entertained no doubt of success: though had she been asked the reason, she would probably have been puzzled to have assigned any cause for her confidence. Still, ill-founded as it had been, the dissipation of the pleasing dream was not the less bitterly felt. What was to be done, was now the question. She had failed

with the King and with his officer. To whom was she now to look for aid ?

She retired to a chamber which had been provided for her by the orders of her charge, and flinging herself upon her knees prayed long and fervently. The devotion seemed to have calmed her feelings, for it was with an expression more composed that she took a seat by her bed-side, and once more began to dream of plans for the future.

Suddenly her eye flashed, as if a new thought had crossed her. † “It is the inspiration of God,” muttered she to herself. “It must be the inspiration of God.”

With the words on her lips, she hurriedly returned to Mary’s apartment, where the young girl still sat weeping over the fate of her foster-brother.

The old woman closed the door after her. What passed between her and her charge was never known. Some of the domestics, indeed, whose duties led them along the corridor, whispered in confidence to their gossips below, that they had heard the voice of Euphame

alternately impassioned in solicitation, and indignant with anger. The curiosity of the servants was aroused. It was destined to be increased. David Moyse was summoned to the conference. Shortly afterward he again came forth, but not alone. Two women followed him; but so wrapped in their mantles, that head and face were veiled from public gaze. Hurriedly and in silence, the three left the palace, and made for the great gate; but the early night of a November day had already set in, and they were soon lost amid its darkness.

CHAPTER VI.

THE TABLES TURNED.

THE Lord Warden sat in his chamber alone. Frank Mowbray was at the tavern; the Signor Octavio had been summoned to the palace by the Queen; and Buccleugh was thus left the sole tenant of the apartment.

The solitude was not unwelcome. The young noble had met much of late to disturb his philosophy. The refusal at Newark, the contest about Mary's Wardship, the very mystery that shrouded his new friendship, had done much to harass, if not agitate: and then, as if these were not sufficient, had come the insult, offered to his office

in the capture of Kinmont Willie, the King's positive orders against any hostile movement, and, last of all, the request of Euphame for his aid.

To say the truth, such is poor human nature, the old woman's interference was rather prejudicial than otherwise, to the interests of her grandson. Buccleugh was not ignorant of the intense animosity with which she regarded him. It was a thing too notorious to be concealed. The mere hatred might have been a matter of indifference, but hatred in action, can be despised by no one. To her, and her alone, he attributed Mary's coldness, his rejection, the mortification of his pride. If then, his feelings had softened towards the young heiress, since he had placed in her hands the papers which released her from the pursuit of Bowes, and imposed on her the load of an immeasurable obligation, those feelings had, in no degree, softened towards her aged counsellor. It was, therefore, without any inward struggle, without a

shadow of compassion for her personal sorrows, that he had denied her suit.

Had it been alleged that there was any sentiment beyond this, anything like triumph in the abasement of his old enemy, Buccleugh would have indignantly denied it. So, at least, he repeatedly assured himself. Yet the assurance seemed to bring with it no soothing feeling, for he remained restless, and moody and dissatisfied. Conscience possibly whispered to him, that he might have acted a more generous part, and that, whatever the offences of Euphame, her age, her sex, her relationship to the young captive, might, at such a moment, have pleaded her pardon.

Such were the thoughts that crossed his mind, as he lay sunk in the recesses of his chair. There was nought to disturb them. The solitary street of the little town had become deserted since nightfall, and no sound broke on his ear, save at intervals, a whisper from the garden beneath the windows. For assassination was fearfully common at

the period, and his henchman Jock, with two or three of his attendants, had taken up their quarters in the little pleasure grounds below; and now lay wrapt in their plaids under the shelter of the wall, enlivening the hours of their watch by fairy legend or story of Border Raid.

Suddenly, Buccleugh was roused from his reverie. A knock was heard on the door which led to the street. It was opened, and apparently an unexpected visitor had arrived, for some bustle followed. Then came the well-known tones of his landlord's voice in remonstrance. In a minute after, a step was heard upon the stair, the door suddenly opened, and the worthy Baillie himself entered.

"My Lord Warden," said he, in a fluttered tone, "twa leddies to wait on yer Lordship." And ere Buccleugh could signify assent or the contrary, two female figures with their heads enveloped in mantles, entered the apartment. Scarcely had they crossed the threshold, than the door again closed,

and Buccleugh was left alone with his mysterious visitors.

The young noble instinctively rose from his chair and bowed ; but in a manner which betrayed sufficiently his astonishment at their presence. The new comers seemed scarcely less embarrassed, for they stood motionless as statues, except the lesser of the two, who seemed to be suffering from pain or weakness, for she unconsciously pressed her hand to her side, and leant against the wall.

A minute might have thus elapsed, and not a word had yet been spoken by any. But the time had been sufficient to enable the Lord Warden to recover his surprise, and in a tone of great respect, he said,

“To what, ladies, am I indebted for this visit ? ”

A moment of hesitation followed the question, but it was only a moment. The taller of the two dames advanced to the table in the centre of the room, on which stood wax lights, and slowly removing the

mantle from her head, gave to view the features of Euphame Cranstoun.

“Baron of Branksome,” said she, in a low faint tone, “do you know me?”

Buccleugh gazed at her, as if there had been a spell in her face. The scene on the banks of the Yarrow had been graven deep on the tablets of his memory, and his cheek flushed, and his brow lowered, as he answered,

“Well—well—but too well; what seek you here?”

“Do you ask? Need you ask? My boy—my boy!”

“I trusted,” said the young Baron coldly, “that this matter had been set at rest between us. I told your messenger, David Moyse, in language as plain as words could utter, that in this I can do nothing.”

“Oh! do not say so.”

“I do say so. But since you have chosen to come here, I may repeat to your ears what I stated to his. I have received the orders of the King, in no way to interfere with the act of Lord Scrope.”

“And would you, the Warden of the Marches, appointed to the high office for the purpose of protecting each kindly Scot that lives within your boundaries, permit them to be led like lambs to the slaughter, without making an effort to reclaim your own?”

“That is a matter, Madam, of which the King must be the sole judge.”

“The King!” repeated Euphame, in tones of intense contempt, “would you give obedience to a miserable creature like that?”

“Madam, he is my master and yours.”

“Master of yours he may be. He is no master of mine. When life is at stake I would save it, were all the kings upon earth to bid me hold my hand.”

“Magnanimous, no doubt,” said Buccleugh, with a slight sneer, “but, I confess, I am not so disinterested. Do you reflect, Madam, that if I were to adopt the plan you recommend, it might cost me liberty and heritage.”

“And do you,” said the old woman, as her check coloured and her eye flashed fire,

“do you hint to me of fear? You, the descendant of a hundred Barons;—do you tell me that you dare not? I have borne no love to your house, Sir Walter; but I will say this for your forefathers—they were of a hotter blood.”

“Madam,” said the young noble, as he crimsoned at the taunt. “When a proper occasion comes, I trust to prove that I am no bastard.”

“And is not this the proper occasion? Is not as fine a lad as ever trod heather, likely to be condemned to an untimely grave?”

“It may be so, Madam; but what have I to do with that?”

“Your duties, as Lord Warden, demand your interference.”

“As I have told you, Madam, my master refuses me permission to exercise them.”

“And why await that permission? Do you not feel that there is a higher Power than the King of Scots—one whose first injunction is to show mercy.”

“And risk life and lands,” said the Warden bitterly, “for the sake of a young man—the grandson of Euphame Cranstoun.”

“Yes—even for the grandson of Euphame Cranstoun. Hear me, Buccleugh. At such a moment as this I will not lie. I have spoken against you ; I have reviled you ;—for I hated you and your house, and have done my best to show that hatred, by choking in the heart of her you wot of, the kindly feelings which otherwise had sprung up towards you—and, therefore, has God sent on me this judgment. This bairn, this boy, the joy of my eyes, the staff of my old age, the last of my race, is to be condemned to a fearful death. Well, I have prayed to God. I have humbled myself in the dust. I have acknowledged that the punishment is just, and with tears, and in ashes have I begged for pardon. As I sinned against Heaven, have I also sinned against you. You told me in the hour of my triumph, that my pride would be abased. Do you doubt the truth of your words ? Is it not so now ?”

The old woman, as she spoke, gradually

approached the Lord Warden, and all at once sank at his feet, and catching hold of his hand, retained it in spite of his efforts to withdraw it, kissing it repeatedly, and bathing it with her tears.

Buccleugh made no answer, but the nervous twitching of the fingers evinced an internal struggle. His agitation did not escape Euphame's notice. She felt that her fate was trembling in the balance, and determined to summon fresh aid.

"Mary," cried she, turning to the figure lingering by the door. "What make you idling there, when your brother's life is on the issue. Come and join your prayers with mine, and perhaps this hard-hearted young man will have compassion."

Mary advanced with faltering steps, and stood trembling beside her old nurse.

"Down on your knees, girl," said the agitated woman, "and pray to him with me ; for after God, he is our only refuge. What !" said she, as her nurseling continued still to retain her upright position, "have ye no touch of nature

in ye? Is this a time for such follies? On your knees I say, at once, if you would not that the curse of pride, which has fallen upon my head, fall also upon yours. And now," said she, as the girl sunk passively, and almost unconsciously by her side, "will you not, Buccleugh, have compassion on a poor lad that never injured you—that ever spoke up for you, when I and others joined in your dispraise—that loves you well. And oh! will you not save from breaking the heart of an old woman who, till the day of her death, will never seek her bed without praying for a blessing upon you and yours."

It would have been impossible for any one to have gazed unmoved at the scene before them. Euphame still held the Warden's hand with a convulsive grasp, as if she feared that her last chance of hope would escape her, and bending forward, gazed on his face with an intensity that seemed as if it would strain the eyeballs from their sockets. As for poor Mary—overwhelmed by distress for her brother, by sorrow for her nurse, and the novelty and

mortification of her position, she kept her eyes fixed upon the ground—her drooping head, her fast falling tears, her person bent almost to the earth, more eloquent perhaps in their helpless abandonment, than even the convulsive agony of her companion.

For a minute Buccleugh gazed in silence on the pair before him. But there is in the hardest heart a well of compassion, and that of the young noble was not of flint. For a minute his lips moved nervously, his hand trembled, his eye-lids quivered, and the struggle was over. The better feelings of humanity had resumed their place, and in a low tone, though the accents were kind, he said :

“And what would you have me do?”

The intonation of the voice seemed to have revealed in an instant to Euphame's ear, the decision of the heart, and with a half scream, she exclaimed :

“He will have mercy, Mary! He will save the boy!” But the sensation of happy hope was too much for her. For the last five days, the exhaustion of travel, the want of sleep,

the misery of the heart, the new found chance of a brighter future, all had produced their influence, and now, worn out with the variety of her emotions, she sank fainting on the floor.

To lift her in his arms, and lay her upon the sofa, was for the young Baron, the work of a moment. Wine was applied to her lips ; water was sprinkled upon her forehead and cheek, and Euphame's senses gradually returned. At first, indeed, as her eyes opened and rested on the figures of the Lord Warden and Mary, who hung over her couch, forgetting for the moment every thing, but the scene before them, she seemed puzzled, and passed her hand across her forehead, as if she would have brushed away the clouds that dimmed her inward vision. But in a moment afterwards, she had recovered her self-possession, and was aware of the locality, and the sad reasons that made her its inmate.

Buccleugh had remarked the rising colour, but he deemed his aged companion too much exhausted for further conversation, and he hastened to prevent its renewal.

“Euphame,” said he, in a kindly tone, “you

must to rest, we will talk of these things to-morrow."

"To-morrow," she replied, in a faint but distinct voice, "it will be too late, we must talk of them to-night—now. Hear me, Lord Warden, while I can yet speak, for I fear my senses are fast leaving me. The lad is in the stone room at the corner of the outer ward, next the river. He is to be judged on Thursday. If he be not a free man ere Friday's sunrise, these old eyes of mine will never look on him again."

"Enough," said her host, "I know the spot, Euphame, and now you must to bed."

"No, no! I am strong," was the reply, but in accents so feeble as strangely to contradict the language.

"But you will to bed, to please me," said Buccleugh, with a smile. "Besides, I would be alone. There is much to be thought of—much to be done."

"He says true," said the old woman hurriedly, as if a new light had dawned upon her. "Come, Mary, we must begone instantly—instantly."

And with an eager grasp, she snatched up her mantle, as if to place it on her shoulders, when a loud rapping was heard at the street-door. It was answered. The steps of many feet resounded below, the new comers mounted the stairs, the door opened, and Sir John Carmichael the Captain of the King's Guard, with a party of the royal soldiery, entered the apartment.

CHAPTER VII.

THE MEANING OF CLEAN SPURS.

FOR an instant, the little party in the chamber remained mute with astonishment. Buccleugh was the first to recover his self-possession, and turning to his uninvited guest, he said in a tone of cold haughtiness,

“To what, Sir John Carmichael, do I owe this unexpected visit?”

“And you would add, unwelcome one;” said the person addressed, a tall, thin, elderly man, in buff coat and large boots, with a grave and somewhat puritanical cast of countenance. “Faith, it is not more pleasant to me, than to you, Buccleugh; but King’s orders, you know,

must be obeyed by the Captain of the King's Body-Guard. You are my prisoner."

"And on what grounds?"

"That I knew not when I came hither, but I can pretty well guess now;" said the old soldier, as he removed his velvet bonnet, and bowed to Mary and her nurse. "The errand of these ladies here, needs no warlock to explain it, and the King's intentions are kinder than I judged them. It's not the first time, Lord Warden, that the heads of your name have been locked up for a week or two, just to keep the Barons of Branksome out of mischief, and the Border quiet."

Buccleugh interchanged a look with Euphame and her companion. It did not escape the quick eye of the Captain of the Guard.

"Come, come!" said he, "we must have no signalling here. You must back to the Palace, Mistress Ker, and I will myself see you to the great gate. It is no time of the night for a noble maiden to be out unattended. So here, take my arm."

Mary obeyed; but ere she did so, moved

towards Buccleugh, apparently with the intention of addressing him. The old soldier again anticipated her.

“Not a word,” said he; “not a syllable. It would do no good, and you would but get the lad into trouble. Come, Lady Kinmont, I must be as strict with you, as with your young mistress; and laying his hand on the old woman’s shoulder, with gentle force, he removed her from the apartment. He could not, however, with all his diplomacy, prevent either her or her companion turning round as they left the room, to bid with their eyes, at least, a last adieu to their host. The glance was but momentary, and yet it was full of a thousand meanings. In Mary, it was bashful and beseeching; in the old woman, it was the long fixed look of despair. Buccleugh replied only by a slight inclination of the head, and in another moment his fair visitors had vanished from his sight.

As soon as he had got them into the corridor, and removed from any dangerous contiguity to his prisoner, Sir John Carmichael’s manner softened.

“Dinna greet, my bonny bird,” said he, in a kind tone. “I am an old friend of your house, and love not to see tears in the eyes of your father’s daughter. So keep a good heart, and get ye ready for the street, for its a nasty night. And up wi’ ye here, Wullie Trummel, deacon, baillie, whatever you be,” shouted he to the master of the house, who, with candle in hand, stood in the shop below, in no enviable state of embarrassment between his contending duties to the great ally of his clan, and the representative of majesty. “Up wi’ ye here, and help the ladies on wi’ their cloaks and mankies, while I gie’ some orders to my lieutenant.”

The worthy magistrate being thus exorcised, made his appearance, and leaving him to assist in the duties of the toilet, Carmichael made his way back to the apartment of the Lord Warden.

“Logie,” said he, addressing a very handsome young officer, “I must convoy the ladies to the great gate. It is but proper respect to the Laird of Cessford’s daughter. Ye will await my return here. So look well to your prisoner. Treat him with all courtesy, but let him not out

of your sight, and above all, do not let him leave the room. And keep your eyes open, I tell ye. You Fife folks think yourselves gey far ben, but mind, you've to deal wi' a Borderer, and I have lived long enough on the Borders, to ken that they would cheat the deil himsel, if it were na that auld Cloutie is ower wise to mell wi' them."

"No fear, no fear, Sir John," was the laughing reply. "I warrant when ye come back, ye'll find the prisoner safe enough."

The old soldier received the vaunt with sundry shakes of the head, and having once more renewed his cautions, returned to his fair charges, and left the house.

For a minute after his departure there was silence, and the young officer looked at his prisoner from time to time, with a glance of mingled fun and embarrassment.

"You hear, Buccleugh," said he, at length, "the character that Sir John gives of you. So you must excuse me if I take my precautions. Bethune," continued he, addressing a subaltern, "you will place a file of men inside the door,

and with the rest you will take your place in the street, for the Lord Warden has some fifty spears in the town, and they may attempt a rescue. If you are meddled with, use sword and arquebuss freely. As for myself, I remain with the prisoner."

With the words he closed the door, and took his place near it.

Buccleugh, in the mean time, had thrown himself into the chair near the fire, and for a minute or two, appeared lost in his own reflections. Suddenly his brow cleared, and a slight smile played about his mouth and eye.

"Logie," said he, turning round to his gaoler. "What a turmoil are you making here? Come here, man, and try a stoup of Bordeaux. Thanks to the Gods ! your old chum and Fife neighbour, Frank Mowbray, who is my guest just now, has still left me a drop in the cellar."

The young officer laughed, but shook his head.

"I am true watch, Buccleugh. Wine does not tempt me."

"No," said the Lord Warden, laughing, "to believe Wat Balcanquhal's sermon, you are proof against everything but the lips of Mistress Margaret Twinslace. But come, let's be rational. You wish, do you not, to deliver me safe and sound to the Captain of the Guard?"

Logie nodded.

"But you have no desire to annoy me?"

"None whatever. So long as I perform my duty, I am content."

"And you believe my word?"

"To the letter."

"If I pledge, then, my honour, *en chevalier preux et loyal*, to remain here till Sir John Carmichael's return. You will be satisfied."

"Thoroughly."

"Well, I give you such a pledge. So come be a good fellow. Play the *buen camarado*, and fill yourself a stoup of wine."

The young soldier at once resigned his post by the door, and advancing joyously to the table, lost no time in seating himself near the wine flasks.

"By the bye," said Buccleugh, as his guest

was commencing his potations. "I am likely to make my way to a prison, so I may as well take off these things. They will be but an incumbrance."

He unbuckled, as he spoke, his knightly spurs, which according to the fashion of the period, were made of massy gold, and having removed them, once more carefully rebuckled them in the same manner, as he would have done had they been still upon his feet.

"These are pretty toys," said the Lord Warden, holding them up to Logie's admiring eyes, "but they are too tempting. There is gold enough on them to make the fortune of all the cut-purses in Linlithgow. It might be as safe to give them in charge to one of my own people. Have you any objections?"

"None whatever. Shall I summon one? I doubt not there are some of your followers in the street."

"It is unnecessary. My henchman's duty is to be near me, and I suspect that he is even now in the garden. I can speak to him from the window."

A shade of suspicion shot across Logie's face.

"You will make an attempt," said he, "to escape?"

"I pledge you my honour that I will remain here till Sir John Carmichael returns."

"But you may give that knave of your's some instructions."

"You shall stand by me, and hear every word I utter."

"It is well; but I warn you that I shall stop the interview if there be any thing in what you say that I do not like."

"Be it so. I desire nothing more."

So saying Buccleugh approached the window, and Logie took his place by his side, ready to interfere if the occasion required it.

The Lord Warden raised the sash, and gave a low whistle. It was instantly replied to from beneath.

"Jock," said the Border chief, "are you sleeping?"

"Na—na, Laird."

"I doubt ye—ye misleared villain," was the answer, in a tone of affected anger. "I ken by the way ye are speaking, that ye're no wide awake yet."

The words were simple, but apparently they conveyed a special meaning to the ears of the young Borderer, for in a low measured tone he replied.

“Ye’re wrang there, Laird. Ye’re wrang. I’m wide awake.”

The answer seemed to content his master, for in a more satisfied tone than before, he replied.

“Weel, Jock, there’s my gold spurs. Take care of them to-night yourself, and to-morrow morning at dawn, you’ll gie them to auld Wat. Tell him to hae them well cleaned, and to look to the buckling of their gear. Say too, that he may gie a supper, at my expense, at the auld house, where your cousin Will Tait is, to as many of his trusty cronies as he likes, and may ask Hobby Noble among the rest. They may crack as many stoups as they will, and gie what cheery toasts they please, but mind they dinna forget Bellenden; for Bellenden’s the word. Do ye understand?”

“Ou! Ay! I understand brawly. And the rest of the lads?”

“They can remain here. But tell them to keep their spurs clean, and seek a safe bield,

for," said the young Warden, extending his hand, and catching on it the rain which fell fast, "it's like to be a stormy night. By the bye, I may need my cloak myself. So tell Dicky o' Dryhope to be waiting wi' it at the door. I'll ask for it if I want it. So be off wi' ye."

With the words he closed the window, and with his jailor once more returned to the table.

"Well Logie," said he, as they resumed their seats, "I trust your jealous temper is satisfied. Nothing very treasonable in that communication; is there?"

"Oh, no! every thing simple enough. So I'll take a pull at the Bordeaux before Sir John returns. With all deference to your excellent qualities, Buccleugh, I never could understand what glamour you had thrown over that restless, roystering blade, Frank Mowbray, so as to keep him constantly by you. Had I known you had such liquor in your cellars, I'd have ceased wondering long ago. But push me the bottle, for there's Sir John's rap at the door, and I must make a gulp of it."

In another minute, the old soldier entered the room, and cast a jealous glance around him, as if he had entertained some doubts about finding his prisoner in safe custody. His suspicions, if any existed, were evidently ill timed. By the side of the fire, sat the Lord Warden, apparently sunk in painful meditation. As for the young Lieutenant of the Guard, he paced backwards and forwards, the clang of his sabre, and the iron heel of his boot upon the floor, bearing evidence of his watchfulness. The old man's eye lightened.

"So the prisoner is all safe, Logie."

"There he is Sir John, to speak for himself."

"No attempts at escape, eh?"

"On the contrary. He pledged me his word of honour, that he would not seek to leave the chamber till your return."

"Did he?" muttered the old man to himself, while something like a shade of suspicion passed across his brow, "I dinna much like that. A damned deal ower mealy mouthed sort o' proceeding, for ane that's sae well kened for a deevil's buckie. Hark ye, Logie," continued

he, addressing his subaltern, "has the Lord Warden left the room since I went?"

"No, Sir John."

"Has he spoken with any one?"

"Only to one of his people, Sir John."

"And how daured you admit any one? Ye might have been overpowered."

"I admitted no one. The man was in the garden."

"And how daured ye, Sirrah, permit a King's prisoner to hold private conference with his friend?"

"I gave no such permission. I heard every word that was said?"

"Well, what said he? What did he? Re-count me the most minute circumstance. I tell ye, you Fife folk are no fit to cope wi thae Border birkies. Though I've lived amongst them a' my life, I can scarce fathom them mysel'. I am certain there has been some deevilry here."

"No, no, Sir John, every thing was simple. Every thing above board."

"That'll be when the deil's blind, and his een are no sair yet. So tell me every thing, Sir, frae the beginning. Omit nothing."

“First Sir John, he took his spurs off, and said that as he was to be locked up, he was not like to need them.”

“Weel,” growled forth the old soldier, “he was na far wrang there.”

“He added that as they were of gold, they were likely to be stolen.”

“I cannot deny that truth either. There’s fifty billies within a trumpet’s call, would cut a man’s throat, for half their value.”

“He added, that for safety’s sake, he had better give them to one of his own people.”

“Gie gowd for safety to a Border reiver? Guid be wi’ us! I doubt if the Edinburgh ministers ever exhibited such a proof of faith. Weel?”

“Well, upon his giving pledge to make no attempt to quit the room, I allowed him to hand them to one of his people, who chanced to be outside.”

“Chanced quotha! I’ll be bound that in ha’ or on hill side, he has never less than a score, within reach of his whistle. Well, what said he?”

“He told him to get them well cleaned, and to look to the buckling of their gear.”

“What !” shouted the Captain of the Guard in a tone of rage. “Did ye mark, man, how the spurs were buckled ?”

“Exactly as yours are now, Sir John.”

“Just as I expected,” said the old soldier, striking the table with his fist, till every glass jingled with the blow. “Clean spurs buckled that gait ! Why ’tis equivalent to ‘boot and saddle.’ And wha was he to gie them to ?”

“I think he called him old Wat.”

“The Laird o’ Harden ;—the best lance, and the wisest leader o’ the Clan. Ony thing else ?”

“Why he spoke something about a supper, that this auld Wat was to give to Hobby Noble, and some other cronies.”

“Hobby Noble ! the broken man frae Bewcastle, wha kens every pass in Cumberland. Why it’s a Border foray. Onything else ?”

“Only that they were to drink a toast, called Bellenden.”

“Guid be wi’ us ! It’s the slogan—the gathering cry of the clan. A’ o’ his name

summoned! I judged it but a Border foray. It's warse, far warse—it's a Warden Raid."

For a minute, the Captain of the Guard stood paralysed.

"This is ower heavy a matter for me to deal wi'," said he, at length. "It is only his Highness that can decide on it. So come, my Lord Warden, to the King. Ah, Logie—Logie," continued he, turning to his crest-fallen Lieutenant, "did I not warn ye? But the fault was mine. So we must mend it as we best may. We may yet be in time to lime a twig for this night-bird, ere he take wing on his precious mission."

Alas! even this consolation was denied the unfortunate Commander of the King's Body Guard, for at that moment the tread of a horse at speed was heard in the back lane, which bounded the garden to the southward. As it passed, there came upon the ear, the same loud strange whistle, which had resounded through the court-yard of the Palace, when the sorcerer was rescued from his persecutors. It now rang clear and distinct through the

little chamber, and for a moment, converted its inhabitants into stone. In another, the sound of steed and rider had passed away—and again all was silent.

“Aye, Logie, there go the gold spurs. That fellow will be at Branksome by daylight. And by this time to-morrow, the heather will be on fire through four counties. But come, my Lord Warden,” said he, with a grim smile, “they say the covey flies ill when the cock-bird is at roost, and it will be my care, that if the Branksome riders be on the hill side, their chief, at least, lies safe in hold.”

While yet speaking, he passed his arm through that of his prisoner, and jealously protected by parties of the Royal Guard in front, on rear, and on either flank, he made his way towards the Palace.

CHAPTER VIII.

A NEW FRIENDSHIP.

WE must transfer the scene to the Queen's apartment. Anne of Denmark, and the Italian were once more together. They had not met since the agitating evening, when he had wrung from her the withdrawal of her consent to the marriage of Mary with Bowes, and her signature to the document, which assured to himself the disposal of the heiress.

During the days that had succeeded, Anne had done nothing. Equally at the mercy of the English Ambassador and the goldsmith of Venice, she had anxiously sought not to give offence to either, by saying or doing anything which might have the character of connecting

herself with the rival party. But when some days had elapsed without a renewal of Bowes's threats, and more especially since she became satisfied of his having succumbed to the same influence, that had gained so extraordinary a power over herself, she began to breathe more freely. By degrees her interest was awakened in favour of the stranger. He was reported to be rich—he was known to be mysterious—he was very handsome; and Anne who loved plots and plotting, and mystery, and who, more especially, loved a fair face, when there was a moustache on the upper lip, determined to cultivate an acquaintance which possessed so many attractions.

Independently of all this, she felt unfeignedly grateful to him for having relieved Mary from a hateful marriage. It was true that she herself had consented to sacrifice her, but it was while influenced by her terror, and she felt not the less under obligations to one who had directly or indirectly been of such essential service to her favourite.

Such were some of the reasons which had

induced the Queen to command the presence of the Italian. Aware that on their first interview she had not appeared to advantage, she had determined that the present occasion should make ample amends for the deficiencies of the past, and that ere he departed, he should be her slave. For Anne was energetic in everything. Changeable as the vane of the weather-cock, she endeavoured to make amends for the fickleness of her feelings by their intensity while they lasted, and flung herself heart and soul into a flirtation, with as earnest a desire for success, as when conducting a conspiracy.

With this object she had availed herself of every aid of dress. The diamond-edged stomacher—the upright ruff—the circlet of jewels in the hair—the velvet robe—the fairy shoe—all evinced her anxiety for adornment.

At length, came the expected visitor. He too seemed to have sacrificed to the graces; and silk and satin, plumes and lace, made him no unfit guest for his distinguished hostess.

And yet the interview at its commencement was not the less formal. By degrees, however, the restraint of the Queen wore off; gradually too the conversation changed from grave to gay. And when we intrude on their *tête-à-tête*, Anne of Denmark and her guest were sitting opposite each other on either side of the ample fire place, the Venetian retaining still his usual look of deference, but with the air of a man, to whom Courts and their habits were familiar, while the Queen lay sunk among the cushions of her chair, changing attitude or pose as whim or coquetry suggested, and ever and anon glancing at her companion with those wonderful eyes, which even now shine forth on us from the canvas, with a blaze of intelligence and brilliancy and light, such as we seek for in vain in any other painted record of female beauty.

“And you will not,” said the Queen, continuing the conversation, which by the privilege of an author we are permitted to chronicle, “You will not tell me your name.”

“I repeat, Madam, Octavio Baldi.”

“Pshaw! Your trade then?”

“My master is a goldsmith.”

“But goldsmiths are sometimes bankers.”

“Generally.”

“And bankers are occasionally merchants.”

“Often.”

“And merchants have been known to be princes.”

“In Italy nothing more common.”

“Your master is a prince then?”

“When every great trader claims the rank, it would be injurious to our credit to confess a less standing than our neighbours.”

“But you will tell me his name, at least?”

“I may not.”

“Nor why you come?”

“It is impossible.”

“Nor where you go?”

“I cannot say.”

“How disagreeable!”

And Anne gave a coquettish glance at the Italian.

The Signor Octavio bore its influence with his usual equanimity.

"And are you really no magician?"

"Madam, there is but one true magic."

"And where is that to be found?"

"In the glance of a woman's eye."

"Ah! flatterer. But when men flatter, they deceive. It was but a few days back, when that same magic you speak of, was powerless."

"On the contrary, it was all powerful. I have studied at Padua, and the disciples of the Rosy Cross held me great in their art; yet in the Hall of the Palace of Linlithgow, I met a power greater than my own."

"Do you dare to say so? when you forced from me my consent."

"On the contrary, Madam, the consent had been forced from you by another. I but restored to you the liberty of free action and free will."

"In what?"

"You were about to sacrifice a girl whom you loved, and become the slave of a man whom you detested. I prevented the sacrifice. I freed you from the slavery."

The Queen looked at him with a curious eye.

“For my love for Mistress Ker, you are right. But what makes you dream that I was the slave of Bowes?”

“Madam, I do not dream it, I know it. You forget that I am the subject of a government that has a thousand agents. It may not stop couriers from Padua on the road, but it is as well acquainted with the contents of their despatches as an English Ambassador.”

“And you—” and the Queen’s bright colour left her in a moment, and she became as on the night of the Masque, pale as death.

“Yes, Madam, I know every thing;—know even more than Bowes, know that by this, he terrified you into acquiescence in his plans; know, moreover, that you have no need to fear him.”

“Are you assured of that?”

“Well, Madam. There is a bit between his jaws. I swear to you by that which is brightest under heaven—those eyes of yours—that he has no power over you.”

“Ah! you wretch,” said Anne, “how you frightened me,” and the liquid orbs once more

flashed on the Italian, a mingled look of coquetry, and admiration, and reproach.

As before, the Signor Octavio seemed to be unconscious of it.

“Your Majesty’s terror,” said he, in his usual calm tone, “was unnecessary. I was always your friend.”

“Friend do you say? Do you remember that fearful scene on the night of the Masque?”

“I remember the night of the Masque well; but if there was aught painful in it, permit me to say, that it was your Majesty, and not I that was to blame.”

“How? Did you not shew me a portrait?”

“I did, Madam; by your own orders.”

“And threatened to discover its history. Did I order that?”

“If not in words, at least, by acts. You made the threat necessary.”

“And this you call friendship?”

“Yes, this I call friendship. I gave you happiness, position, safety, in return for what cost you nothing, though the want of it, ensured my misery.”

“ In what ?”

“ The interests of a friend were at stake.”

“ Why, scarce a moment since, you told me that mine were not in peril.”

“ But I spoke of another friend’s.”

“ Another friend ! Mistress Ker, no doubt. You are a perfect Grand Turk, Signor Octavio. Your capacity for tender emotions seems il-limitable,” and Anne threw herself pettishly back into her chair.

“ I fear I explain myself but ill, Madam. My friend was a man.”

“ A man ?”

“ Yes, Madam.”

“ You are sure it was a man ?”

“ Yes, Madam.”

“ Ah ! that was not so bad. And who ?”

“ The Lord Warden.”

“ And did you show your friendship to him as you did to me, by frightening him out of his wits ?”

“ On the contrary, he shewed his friendship to me, when I was frightened out of mine. He saved my life.”

“Well,” said Anne, nodding her head approvingly. “In such a case friendship was excusable.”

“I am happy in the approbation of your Majesty. Now, as he was in love with Mistress Ker—”

“I doubt that.”

“Or Mistress Ker was in love with him.”

“I doubt that, too.”

“At any rate, her foster-brother, a moss-trooper, a handsome young Border savage, had done me a service.”

“And so you determined on freeing Mary from her suitor.”

“Yes.”

“That you might repay Buccleugh for your life.”

“Exactly.”

“And (for I have heard whisper of your adventure on the road,) Kinmont Willie for his aid.”

“Your Majesty is right to the letter.”

“But my Majesty has not yet finished her speech, and must be allowed to proceed. And

to do all these said acts of philanthropy, you came to the conclusion that it was right, and proper, and necessary to frighten the King's Consort out of her wits? Friend Octavio," continued she, "your friendship takes occasionally a very unpleasant form."

"Ah! Madam, you have no right to blame me. Did I abuse my power?"

"Fearfully."

"Did I hint at the names of the Promessi Sposi?"

"In a manner distinct enough for any but a fool, or my husband, to have comprehended it."

"*Ahi crudel!* What would have been the consequence, if, instead of hinting at the pavilion at Fredenborg, I had spoken out—if I had said that the S. B. were the initials of Count Stephen Beale—if I had brought from my chamber the corresponding portrait, with the A. P. stamped on its velvet—the Princess Anne; or as according to the best books of heraldry, it might now be translated, Anne, by the Grace of God, Queen of Scots. Come, Madam,

confess, at least, that if I was a sorcerer, I used my spiriting gently. There were evil ministers within my call, and what would have been your feelings to-day, if I had summoned them?"

"Well, well," said the Queen, "we will not wake up old grievances. There is my hand in token of future amity."

With the words, Anne extended her fair fingers. The Italian sank upon one knee, and pressed them to his lips, with an unction perhaps greater than friendship demanded. But the rules of Platonic philosophy are ill-defined, and ladies occasionally pardon in its disciples an ignorance that is unavoidable. Anne, at least, expressed no anger, and if the colour mounted to her cheek, the eyes lost none of their fire.

"And now," continued she, after a pause. "You will give me those pictures and the papers, that you wot of?"

"I will, Madam, when——"

"When what?"

"When the Lord Warden is married to Mistress Ker."

"But I have told you that there is no love between them."

"There is much. There will be more."

"And what have I to do with their affairs of the heart?"

"You will have to aid in bringing them to a happy conclusion."

"Oh! ho! I see. This boasted friendship of yours, is once more to be made secondary to your gratitude to a Border noble, or your admiration of the sister of a Border free-booter." And Anne turned away pouting.

"You do me wrong, Madam," answered the Venetian. "You do me great wrong. I would not have the happiness of your Majesty rest on conditions. There are the portraits. There is the paper you spoke of."

And taking from the inside of his doublet, the miniatures and a small packet, he placed both in the Queen's hand.

Anne clasped them eagerly, and allowing the papers to sink into her lap, opened the picture case, and gazed long and eagerly at its contents.

"Ah! Stephen, Stephen," said she, as tear

after tear coursed down her cheek, "on that morning when you returned from Venice, and presented me with those copies of our portraits by Bassano, how little did I dream of a moment such as this."

The weeping seemed to relieve her, for after a while she placed the miniatures in her bosom, and with trembling fingers turned to the packet of letters, and selecting one from it, which had the appearance of a formal and attested document, she flung it hastily into the fire. The flame caught the fragile tell-tale. For an instant it smouldered, then came the bright glare of the devouring element, and in another moment the only evidence of its existence, was a black filmy shred, which flickered away and disappeared.

With eager eyes, did Anne mark the progress of dissolution, and then with a long deep sigh, muttered to herself, "I am safe at last, safe—safe—safe."

"Yes Madam," said the Venetian. "You are safe at last. If I was a magician, I am no longer. I have broken my wand. I have

lost my power ; and now," continued he, as he sank upon his knee before her, "I come to you, not as a master who is able to compel, but as a suppliant. I feel certain, as certain as of existence, that there is love between the Lord Warden and Mistress Ker. I have done you, Madam, some slight service. Will you not, out of the kindness of your womanly heart, do me a service in return?"

"Willingly ! most willingly, and the more so, because I love Mary, and owe her some reparation. But in what can I aid?"

"As yet, I scarce can tell, though I feel a presentiment, that such help will soon be necessary. I have it from a sure hand, that Bowes has been twice to-day with the King, and I know the man well enough to be certain that there is some evil projected."

"And you would have me assist you against him?" said the Queen, with something of a shudder, as there came over her mind a recollection of the threats of the Ambassador of Elizabeth.

"Yes ! against him if need be. And fear

him not. So long as I am near, I promise you he is helpless."

"But when—how—where?"

"That, Madam, time will show, and here," continued he, as he sprang to his feet, "comes, if I mistake not, the messenger of evil."

In fact, at that moment, a hurried tapping was heard at the door, and on permission being given, Mary tottered into the room, followed by Euphame.

The tale of sorrow was soon told—the visit of Euphame and Mary to Buccleugh—the unwilling consent to interfere—the King's opposition, and the arrest.

The Signor Octavio was silent for a moment.

"I see all now," said he at length. "I can now understand the visit of Bowes to the King. The rejection of his suit preys upon his mind, and he would pay it back by the death of the foster-brother of his lady-love. I must instantly, Madam, to his Majesty; but it would be well, ere I go, that I should learn our chances of hope or fear. Where is the Lord Warden? What is the King doing? Both are

matters of importance. Is there any one that I can trust, who could inform me of this?"

"Oh yes," said Mary, "there is David Moyse. "You may trust him, for he hates the Southerners, as he calls them, and was I believe a lover of my nurse's in the days of his youth."

"That is sufficient," said the Italian, with a glance at the Queen. "The votaries of Cupid, and his confidantes, are always sure allies. But time presses, and it would be well, that I saw my future friend."

In compliance with the wishes of the Venetian, Bernard Lindsay was sent in search of his fellow official. The old Gentleman-usher had betaken himself to his usual post, in attendance on his master; but as soon as he learned that Mistress Mary Ker desired his presence, he immediately obeyed the summons, and appeared in the Queen's apartment.

"David," said Anne, "do you know any thing of the Lord Warden?"

"He's in his Highness's chamber, with the Captain of the Guard."

"And the King, what is he doing?"

“Ou, as usual! He’s at the Canary, drinking and driving, the same as at Upslo.”

“And is he tipsy?” said the Signor Octavio.

“Na! he has only got the length o’ the English.”

“The English! What has that to do with the matter?”

“Just a’. He’s aye haverin about some ungodly ballad or other. When he’s gey weel slokened, he gies ye a screed o’ them in English. When the maut’s fairly abune the broo, he tak’s to the Latin. But the de’il a thing will serve him but Greek, gin he’s ance blin’ fou’.”

“A satisfactory explanation, Master Moyse. But will he admit me?”

“Ye need nae doubt that. Ye hae some chains left? and he’s ay fain to see ony ane wi’ gowd in his pouch.”

“Well, Madam,” said the Italian. “I will to his Majesty, and yet, ere I go, I would beg permission to address a few words to you in private.”

The Queen smilingly assented, and the two retired into one of the recesses of the windows.

The conference was a short one. In answer to the communication made to her, Anne laughed and nodded.

“You may depend upon me,” said she.

“And I trust your Majesty will not only lend your aid, but lend it soon, for I am unequal to this task alone.”

And bowing profoundly, he followed his companion, and proceeded to the King’s apartment.

CHAPTER IX

SOLOMON IN HIS CUPS.

THE chamber now occupied by the Majesty of Scotland, was the same in which he had received the English Ambassador. It was of large size. Within its walls, the unfortunate Mary had first seen the light, and the filial piety of her son had, in consequence, raised it to the dignity of a reception-room—an honour to which, independently of other circumstances, it was well entitled from the beauty of the landscape beneath: for its windows looked upon garden and lake.

It was to this apartment, that Moyse now conducted the Italian. As they approached the

door, there came upon the ear the words of a popular song of the period.

My wife will drink nae thing
But sack and canary.
Oh ! that my wife would drink
Hooly and fairly,
Hooly and fairly.

Whatever opinion might be entertained of the melody by the audience, the melodist himself, was evidently entranced by it, for notwithstanding that Davy knocked twice and loudly, no notice was taken of the intimation of his presence ; and the old man, at length, impatient of delay, or presuming on the right of his office, raised the latch and entered, followed by the Italian.

The interior presented a scene little in accordance with that dignity which is supposed to be an inherent attribute of the private pleasures, as of the public duties of royalty.

Near the fire, sunk in the recesses of a large arm-chair, and with his legs upon a table, sat the Majesty of Scotland. Beside the recumbent limbs, probably for the convenience of greater propinquity, stood a number of wine-flasks,

while some others, which had evidently disgorged their contents, lay upon the floor near him.

The King's face was flushed, partly from liquor, and partly, as it seemed, from irritation, for he carolled forth the ditty quoted above, with a somewhat lugubrious intonation, now beating time with a roll of papers which he held in his hand, and now glancing with an expression of disgust at the far end of the chamber, where the old Calvinistic Captain of the Guard and his prisoner, stood motionless as statues. His eye brightened, however, as he caught a view of the Italian, and ere his venerable Gentleman-usher could express any reason for his appearance, the King shouted forth :

“Come your ways, Signor Octavio. Come your ways. The sight of you is good for sair e'en. Sit ye down here, and Davy ye auld gomeril, gi'e us some wine glasses on the instant.”

The Usher obeyed the order ; and in another minute, the Italian was seated by the side of the large table.

“Now fill your glass, Signor,” said his Majesty. “You may chance no' to have the

power of doing sae lang. May the deil tak their edicts—" and James, probably recollecting that gesture was the best part of eloquence, accompanied the anathema by a thump upon the table, violent enough to set every glass and bottle jingling where it stood.

" You seem excited, Sire !"

" Had I gane clean wud, ye need na ha'e been surprised at it. See here," continued he, as he shuffled one after another the confirmatory documents into his guest's hands. " Here's an edict frae the Ministers o' Edinburgh, forbiddin' under pain o' being excommunicate, ony ane to trade wi' Spain. Nae mair drinking and driving. Nae mair Sack and Canary. And here's anither, ordaining that there's nae market to be held on a Monday. They'll end by making a fast o' ilka day in the week. And here's anither forbiddin ony bachelor to ha'e a servant-lass in his house ; and here's anither ; but what's the use o' detailing a' their enormities. In a word, Signor Octavio, the warld has coupit the creels athegither, sin' thae Geneva billies hae gottin the upper hand."

“Rather inquisitorial, I confess, Sire.”

“Inquisitorial, quotha ! I’ll back Wat Balcanquhal against Torquemada and a’ his gang. He’ll be the death o’ me, that chield. He’ll drive me demented, I tell ye. Pharoah’s life was a joke compared wi’ mine.”

“Yet he had ten plagues, Sire.”

“I hae twa worth the hail batch o’ them.”

“The Edinburgh ministers, I see are the one. But the other ?”

“There !” said the King, pointing to Buccleugh. “Ye’re right forenent him. *Coram latrone viator.*”

“I am a traveller, sure enough, Sire ; but where am I to look for the other part of the simile.”

“There man—there, I tell ye,” said James, once more directing with drunken energy, the royal fingers towards his unfortunate prisoner.

“The Lord Warden a robber !”

“He may no hae put his hand into anither man’s pouch himsel, but he is king of the Ostrogoths, as I ca’ them ;—chief o’ a’ the moss-troopers — jackmen - riders — cattle - reivers —

maisterfu' beggars—sorners—thieves, and broken men on the Border. No merely a robber—but the vara impersonation o' robbery, spulzieing, hamesucken, treason, habit and repute violence, and sic like."

"Dreadful! shocking!" said the Italian, with well-affected horror, "and what do you intend to do with him?"

"Condemn him presently."

"Try him, I suppose your Majesty means?"

"Ou! its a' the same thing. That's ae advantage o' haeing to deal wi' a Borderer. Ye're ay sure how the case will end afore ye begin it."

"And yet if your Majesty be forced to condemn, I trust you purpose to temper justice with mercy?"

"What do ye tak me for, Signor Octavio?" said the King in an offended tone. "If ye had kenned me better, ye might have guessed that I had the auld Roman virtues."

"I doubt it not, Sire. But in what does that affect the case?"

"Hae ye never read, that the elder Brutus

frae a regard to public duty, condemned his ain son ?”

“I remember the fact.”

“Weel. I form mysel on his model.”

“And you propose—”

“To follow sae glorious an example. It’s weel kenned that Buccleugh is near sib to oursel—his mither and my granny were baith o’ the House of Angus—and it will be a grand opportunity of proving to the kintra, our love of justice, by condemning ane o’ our ain blood.”

“Pleasant result,” thought the Italian to himself, “of counting kith and kin with royalty.” He paused for an instant, as if in thought.

“Nothing could be more magnificent,” said he, at length, “than the conduct of your Majesty. But I may be permitted to remind you, that the stern sons of the old Republic, if they were just, were also generous. When Pyrrhus and his army were in want of food, the Romans liberally supplied them.”

“I mind it weel enough.”

“Yes, they hospitably supplied the wants of an enemy, and I would respectfully suggest that

your Majesty would worthily tread in their footsteps, if you made this King of Ostrogoths—this foeman of your Majesty—take his place at the table and invigorate his spirits for the coming struggle, by tasting some of this divine liquor.”

“No a bad thoct,” said the King. “So come your ways, Buccleugh, and tak a drap o’ Canary.”

The young Warden, in obedience to a private signal from the Italian, at once advanced to the table, and took his place opposite.

“And come you awa’ too, Carmichael,” said the King addressing his Captain of the Guard.

“I am like the Rechabites of old, your Highness,” was the formal reply. “I drink no wine, and, moreover,” added he in a caustic tone, “I am thinking that if we are to keep watch and ward, it may be as well that one of the party should be free from liquor.”

“Hear till him, Signor Octavio,” said James in accents of great contempt. “He’s ca’ed a sensible man, and yet he counts drinking and dancing twa of the seven deadly sins. He

looks gliffed eneugh, if ye set him near a pint stoup, but I wuss ye saw his face when my wife's doing a galliard or the coranto. But to business, lads—fill your glasses. Ay Davy," continued the King, as the wily domestic placed some beakers on the table, "that's richt. Thae are the things for a drouthy carle," and James hastily seized one of them, and filled it to the brim.

His example was followed by his two guests; the Italian had already communicated to Buccleugh by a glance, the necessity of encouraging the royal potations, and both with affected eagerness, laid hold of the wine flasks.

Some half hour might have thus elapsed, but though both the new assistants in the debauch began to feel flushed, the King still held on stoutly.

"This will never do," said the Italian to himself. "We shall be caught in our own trap. I must get our Solomon to speak. Words help liquor wonderfully."

"And when, Sire," said he, addressing the

King, "do you proceed to open your court of justice?"

"When I've finished the Canary."

"And you prepare yourself for the judgment seat with the liquor."

"Just that. Naething like the *facundi calices* for making an orator, and I'm taking, as ye may see, a mutchkin or twa extra, as I wuss ye to hae an opportunity o' hearing rael eloquence."

"You forget, Sire, that that is a felicity which I have enjoyed already."

"The night I judged ye to be brunt for a Warlock?"

"Exactly."

"Nae doubt; but I hae ay remarked that when a man's ganging to be hanged, or put through hand some gate or ither, he has na that critical appreciation o' the beauties o' a judge's language, or the grace of his delivery, that he wad hae had if he had been merely an onlooker."

"True, no doubt: and yet with regard to the matter in hand, I scarce see how this case is to go on. Where there is a criminal to be

tried, there must be a charge against him, and there is no accuser."

"Hout, the assize shall na stand still for that. I'll be accuser mysel."

"I understood your Majesty was judge."

"I'll be baith."

"But would not the functionary, whose business it is, be offended with this interference with the duties of his office?"

"What Tam Hamilton! him offended! My certie lad, ye may ken mony things, but ye dinna ken Tam. Sae lang as ye let him keep filling his nine pouches wi' siller, he does na care wha discharges the duties of his office, or whether they're discharged ava'. So I'll be King's advocate in his room; and it'll be just a god-send to you and Buccleugh, for ye'll hae twa orations frae me instead o' ane."

"One in your character of judge."

"Exactly."

"And the other as public prosecutor."

"Just that. And first as in duty bound, I'll be counsel for the Crown. I'll mak ye an oration PRO CORONÁ, and that minds me, that I

may as weel gie ye a screed o' the ither oration
PRO CORONÁ."

"In order that I may have the opportunity
of judging of the relative merits of ancient and
modern oratory."

"Preceesely."

"But I trust your Majesty does not intend to
do your rival the injustice of spoiling his master-
piece by a translation."

"Na, na. Ye shall hae it in the original
Greek."

"Thank Heaven," said the Italian, to himself,
"here is Davy's superlative coming at last ;
and lucky it is so, for I could not have stood
out much longer. But what in Heaven's name
delays the Queen?"

"And ye maun ken," continued James,
"that there's a certain appropriateness in sic
an address, for it has been said, that there is a
close approximation atween Athens and this
town o' Auld Reekie."

"But this is Linlithgow, Sire, not Edin-
burgh."

"May be ; but canna ye just fancy it to be

Edinbro'. I doubt, freend Octavio, ye hae na a poetical imagination."

"*Culpa mea*," said the Italian, apologetically, "I pray you to pardon my obtuseness. But your Majesty was remarking, that there was a resemblance between the capitals of Attica and Scotland."

"It is a fact admitted on a' hands; and that, no merely in the critical acumen of the inhabitants, and their disposition to revolts, insurrections, and popular movements, such as the *varium et mutabile vulgus* indulges in, when excited by demagogues such as Cleon, or—or—"

"The Minister of the Tolbooth."

"Just that—but in the localities of the towns themselves. For ye see, we hae got at Edinburgh, the Castle Hill, whilk is preceesely the Acropolis; and Arthur's seat, whilk may be compared to Mount Hymettus."

"Famous for its honey-bees."

"Just that—no that I'm sure that there are ony honey-bees in Arthur's seat, but there's plenty of bum-bees, and aiblins a wasp-bink."

“A resemblance so close, Sire, can defy criticism. And then, Leith answers to the Piræus.”

“And Inch Keith to Salamis.”

“And your Majesty to Demosthenes.”

“That’s no ill guessed. I begin, Signor Octavio, to hae the idea that ye are a lad o’ a most subtle and pregnant wit.”

“And the Lord Warden, and I, of course, are the Demos.”

“Na—na. Ye’re ower Patrician for that. Ye are o’ the Eugenetai. Ye’ll be members o’ the Amphictyonic Council, I’m thinking. Buccleugh, did ye ken that ye were an Amphictyon?”

“I am anything your Majesty pleases,” said the young noble, with a good-humoured smile.

“That’s a good lad. Be ay obedient to King and kintra. Sae, I’ll tak’ a note of the observation, and gie ye the benefit o’t, in passing judgment. And now, Signor Octavio, to shew you how the oration *shuld* hae been delivered. *Magnum loquar nitarque cothurno*. But to do that, I should be

upon my legs. Sae ye may as weel help us up."

The members of the Amphictyonic Council hastened to obey the summons. The Majesty of Scotland, with some difficulty, was placed upon his feet, and with a gravity proportioned to the occasion, commenced thus :

"PROTON MEN, O ANDRES ATHENAIOI. But what the deil's that? It's the Queen's fiddlers, as I'm a living man."

The interruption which had so cruelly broken the thread of his Majesty's eloquence, was occasioned by a burst of gay music, which came from the corridor outside the room; and ere the King was able to remonstrate against its inopportune appearance, Anne of Denmark, at the head of a troop of her attendant maidens, broke into the apartment.

CHAPTER X.

BABBITY BOWSTER.

THERE is an old dance which still not unfrequently plays a part in the autumn revels of a Scotch country-house. It is called Barbara Bolster, or, to use the phraseology of the country, Babbity Bowster, and is generally accompanied by a gay air, well known in the Border counties.

The form of the ancient measure is this : A lady takes a cushion from a sofa, and, after wending her way for some time alone round the room, and fast or slow, as the fitful notes of the music may dictate, ends by sinking on one knee, and dropping it at the feet of any one in the apart-

ment. The person thus challenged is obliged, by the etiquette of the dance, to take up the cushion, and follow his conductress; with the privilege, however, when exhausted, of getting quit of the burden by making it over, with the same ceremony, to another, till, at last, every person present has been pressed into the service; and the scene, as old and young, gouty and nimble, follow, in Indian file, their capricious leader, now circling the apartment, and now winding their way through a labyrinth of chairs and tables, designedly scattered about in most admired confusion, is often inexpressibly ludicrous. The dance is accompanied by a chant, in which every one is obliged to join, and the energy of whose intonations, as may be easily supposed, is sometimes greater than their harmony.

Such was the dance, whose air was now played by the Queen's band of musicians outside the door; and to its gay notes Anne of Denmark, as we have mentioned, followed by Lady Beatrice, Mary Ker, and her two Danish attendants, floated into the room.

For a minute or two, the Queen and her companions contented themselves by making the tour of the chamber, singing as they went, the words of the song :

“ Wha learned ye to dance,
Babbity Bowster, Babbity Bowster !
Wha learned ye to dance,
Babbity Bowster, brawly.”

approaching, from time to time, some individual in the chamber, and then retiring, as if undecided on whom to make the attack.

On the spectators, the effect of their appearance was various. The Italian wore his usual self-possessed look, except that a slight smile showed that he welcomed the arrival of the promised aid. Buccleugh, not so well acquainted with the intention of the performers, contemplated with something like anger the well-counterfeited gaiety of his lady-love, at a moment fraught with such important consequences to her foster-brother and himself. The King, with the impressionability of his simple nature, had already, in the excitement

of the music, and the contemplation of the grace of his Royal Consort, forgotten Demosthenes and his oratory, Athens and the Athenians. But the person upon whom the votaries of Terpsichore had produced the greatest impression, was unquestionably Sir John Carmichael. The old Calvinistic Captain of the Guard, true to the stern spirit of his creed, considered wine an abomination ; but ‘flinging on the floor,’ as he termed dancing, not only a sin deadly enough to ensure the perdition of those who practised it, but one certain to imperil materially the salvation of any who permitted themselves to be the witnesses of sports so unholy. The stout old Baron, therefore, though one of the bravest warriors of his time, grew actually pale with terror, as he saw the entrance of the revel rout, and each time that the Queen flitted past him, as she and her companions tripped round the room, drew close up against the wall, as if to remove himself, as far as possible, from the noxious influence.

His fears were not unmarked, but Anne of Denmark, for some time, did not appear dis-

posed to profit by them. At length, after having circled the apartment four different times, she approached her victim, and dropping the cushion at his feet, touched it for an instant with one knee. The only result of the challenge, was to put the old soldier to flight; and with agitated steps, as if the pillow itself had possessed contamination, he hurriedly sought an asylum in another corner of the room. It was in vain. His inveterate enemy pursued him on the instant. A second, a third, a fourth time, as he successively took refuge in different angles, did the cushion drop at his feet, and the Royal votary of pleasure kneel before him; till, at length, fairly overcome by his terrors, he made for the door, and having gained it before he was overtaken by his persevering enemy, distinguished his exit with a repulsive wave of the hand, which might have been honestly interpreted, "Avaunt thee, Satanas!"

The King had marked the struggle with immense delight, and hailed the flight of his officer with uproarious laughter.

"*Cedunt arma togæ*, Signor Octavio," said

he. "Od, the cotties hae the best o't. I wonder wha's turn's next."

He was not long left in suspense, for the Queen, after glancing her mischievous eyes round the assembly, dropped the cushion at the feet of the venerable Gentleman Usher.

Poor Davy, who was little less Calvinistic than the Captain of the Guard, contemplated the challenge with horror, and, for a moment, appeared to hesitate. On one side was Paradise; on the other, the recollections of Euphame in her youth, and the probable fate of her unhappy grandson.

"I dinna ken what the minister would say to it," muttered he to himself, "but the lad's life is at stake, and it's a wark o' necessity and mercy. There's nae denying it—necessity and mercy. Sae I maun e'en play the fule like the rest," and Davy valiantly picked up the cushion, and did his best to follow the steps of his more agile associates.

If the amount of applause be any test of the excellence of the performance, Davy must have rivalled the elder Vestris, for his evolutions,

to use the theatrical phrase, brought down the house. As for the King, he clapped his hands with frenzied energy, and laughed till the tears ran down his cheeks.

“Lowp, Davy,” screamed he, as soon as he had regained power to articulate. “Lowp, ye auld sinner. Eh man ! but that was grand,” continued he, as he hailed some new saltatory effort, on the part of his domestic. “I doubt whether the puggy could hae beaten that.”

But his eulogies were destined to have a new object; for the Queen as she wound her way through tables and chairs, whispered to the old usher as she passed, and Davy, in obedience to his instructions, dropped the cushion at the feet of the Lord Warden.

Buccleugh, who had already gathered from the significant glances of the Queen, the object of the new revelries, gaily accepted the challenge, and followed his conductress.

“Eh ! wow,” said James, as he remarked the addition to the number of the performers. “A high official of the Crown—a trusty servant—that is,” continued he, correcting himself,

“ trusty, when he’s no ta’en up wi’ consorting wi’ reivers, and rescuing moss-troopers—dancing Babbity Bowster. But what’s this o’t,” continued he, as the Italian, in turn followed the rest. “By my saul, there’s the Signor Octavio footing it too. Him o’ a’ folk on earth! Him, wha was sent here by a high and mighty—Guid be wi’ us!” muttered he to himself, as if some sudden memory had come over him. “What was I ganging to say! That’s the second time that I was near setting the kail in the reek.”

He had, however, little time to speculate upon the possible consequences of his present confidential disposition, for the Queen and her fair comrades once more swept by, and the cushion was dropt at the royal chair. The summons was accepted with a loud laugh.

“What, ye’re wanting me, too,” said he, in accents which were becoming gradually less articulate. “Weel, I’m no feared. I’m Falkland-bred. I ken my *motus Ionicos* as weel as ony o’ ye. So here gaes,” and having, with some difficulty raised the cushion, and got him-

self upon his legs, with a stout heart, but very uncertain steps, he made after the rest of the joyous band.

Hitherto the Queen had, for the most part, led her companions round the room. Now, however, she seemed to be seized with a new whim, and instead of going straight forward, wound her way through tables and chairs, as if threading the mazes of a labyrinth. Her faithful associates followed close at her heels, stepping fast or slow ; now describing a figure of eight at a snail's pace, and now whirling round the room with a rapidity of motion that would have done honour to a dancing Dervish.

Such changes of step or speed were enough to affect a head, had it been as sober as that of Sir John Carmichael's. Their influence upon that of the King was not long in shewing itself. His footsteps, uncertain at first, rapidly began to stagger, till at length, as he passed near the royal chair, he hurriedly dropped the cushion, and having succeeded in catching hold of one of the arms, by its aid, although with considerable difficulty, once more inducted himself into his seat.

“I’m clean dune,” muttered he to himself, “Thae lasses! they’re just daft. *Bacchantes*, *Corybantes*, the hail tott o’ them, sin the days o’ Adam. But what can ye expeck, puir things, TOIS ANDRASI PHRONEMA, GYNAIXIN OUK ET, OUK ET, OUK ET—” but the quotation was never destined to be finished. The King’s head dropped into one of the corners of the chair, and in another instant, his deep breathing announced that the conjoint influence of his exertions and the liquor, had consigned him to the arms of Morpheus.

The dance paused instantly, and the Queen put her finger to her lips.

“He sleeps,” said she. “But what was it, Signor Octavio, that he was muttering?”

“Something, Madam, about wisdom being the distinguishing feature of our sex, though not exactly so of yours.”

“Oh! ho! my dear wise husband,” said Anne. “True man to the last. Ever your eternal vanity; and now, *marito mio*,” said she, curtsying to the ground before him, “let us see if this wisdom of yours be aware what the wife of your bosom is about?”

With the words, she pinched soundly the nose, the cheek, and the chin of the Royal slumberer. There was neither remonstrance nor reply, and the breathing continued heavy and unbroken.

“Yes,” continued she; “Babbity Bowster has done the business for us; but not a moment is to be lost. Buccleugh, you must be off at once.”

“But, how?”

“By the window to the garden; you will find a boat in the summer-house, and must row yourself across the lake.”

“But the wunda,” muttered Davy, “is gude fifteen feet frae the grund. The lad will break his neck.”

“Out with your knife, man; and cut the curtain cords.”

“And what’s he to do when he gets out? He’ll be grippit ere he can win awa’ a hundred yards.”

The observation was too just not to carry conviction with it; and for a minute, the party stood silent.

“Come, come;” said Anne of Denmark, ever impatient. “Moments are precious, and we are losing them. Lord Warden, it is your business—can you suggest nothing?”

Buccleugh reflected for a moment.

“I could manage well enough,” said he, at length, “if I could get a message sent to my people. They are all on the alert, for they, of course, know of my arrest, and I sent orders to them to keep their spurs clean.”

“Well, here’s Davy,” said the Queen, “he shall carry the message.”

“It’s no possible,” said the cautious usher; “Sir John Carmichael wad stop me at the door. He’s jealousying something, already; and as I’m a servant of the Palace, and he is Captain of the Guard, I am, as it were, under his jurisdiction, and maun obey him.”

“And yet it’s our only chance; what is to be done?”

“Could I, Madam,” said the Italian, “be of any service?”

“Yes, yes—if you would undertake it.”

“But where am I to find the men. Every

minute is precious, and a delay of half an hour, would be fatal."

"I have it now," said Buccleugh, once more taking his part in the conversation, "I have got a clear idea into my head at last. The Signor Octavio knows one of my attendants, Dicky of Dryhope."

"A little fellow with sandy hair, eyes like a hawk."

"The same. He is doubtless now, according to orders, waiting outside the palace gates with my cloak. Give him this dagger as a token, and tell him to bring my horse; and as many of my people as he can collect, to the ruined peel, or watch-tower, on the other side of the lake. He knows you, and will obey the order."

"Be off then," said the Queen. "Be off at once."

But Davy, whose shrewd common sense and perfect self-possession served him better in the excitement of the moment than the more highly educated qualities of his colleagues, once more interposed.

"I'm thinking," said he, "that ye had better begin skirling and flinging on the floor again ;

or, when the door is opened, Sir John may tak a fancy to come into the room; and that'll ruin a'."

"You are right, Davy," said the Queen, "quite right. You deserve to be a prime minister. So once more, girls, to Babbity Bowster; and you, Davy, do your best steps, man. As for you, Buccleugh, keep near me. It is as well that you should catch the eye of any that are curious outside."

With the words, the Queen once more sprang off in the dance, holding in her hand the fatal cushion, and was followed by all the party except the Italian. With his usual composed air, the Signor Octavio made his way to the door, and opened it. Scarcely had he done so, when, as the old usher's sagacity had foreseen, Sir John Carmichael half-entered the apartment. His eyes at once lighted upon the person of the prisoner. So far all was well. But ere he could decide as to the propriety of resuming his guard within, the Queen hurried towards him with an infantine scream of delight, and dropped the cushion at his feet. Once more the mystic badge produced

its effect, and the discomfited disciple of John Knox, with something like an anathema on his lips, fled from the chamber. In the meantime, the Italian had made his exit. The door closed, and the party were once more left alone.

The King still slept heavily in his great chair.

His Royal Consort, with that passion for excitement which marked her character, superintended eagerly the preparations for escape.

“Beatrice,” said she, addressing her attendant, “do you and Ann Kroas and Katrine Skinkell keep dancing near the door, and, remember, sing with all your might. And, Davy, out with your knife, and cut the curtain cords. That’s right. Now set your back against the door; and, if ye be a man, keep it shut as long as may be. And now, Buccleugh, to your work.”

The ropes were hurriedly fastened together and passed under the arms of the young noble. In another instant, he was outside the window.

“Now hold on girl,” said the Queen, ad-

dressing Mary Ker, whom, with a touch of female malice, she had summoned to her aid. "I have heard of fair ladies helping a gay gallant in at a window; but, up to the present eventful moment, I believe it is not upon record, as my learned husband would have said, that any exerted themselves to get one out of it."

In the meanwhile, the descent had been safely accomplished. Young, light, and active, Buccleugh had reached the ground, and, in another moment, was lost to view amid the darkness. But ere the Queen could congratulate herself, or her companion, upon the success of her manœuvres, the door was opened with a violence which had nearly sent the worthy Davy on his nose, and Bowes, with hurried steps, and an expression of irritation and alarm, rushed into the room.

CHAPTER XI.

THE NINE-STANE RIGGE.

BOWES was breathless with excitement. His faculties too were evidently engrossed by one absorbing object of interest, for without taking note of the other denizens of the chamber, he went straight to the royal chair, and on finding its occupant asleep, shook him roughly enough to dispel even his deep slumbers.

The King opened his eyes, at length, and in no amiable voice, asked "what the de'il he wanted."

"There's some mischief afoot, your Majesty. The spearmen of the Lord Warden."

"Weel, what of them?"

“ They have got suddenly to horse, and have left the town.”

“ What, a’ the reivers gane !” said James, in tones of evident satisfaction, “ I’m doom’s glad o’t. A gude riddance o’ a bad rubbish.”

“ But there’s a window open,” said the astonished Ambassador, “ and a sound of oars upon the lake. Good heavens, Sire !” cried he, as he glanced anxiously round the room, “ The Lord Warden is not here. He has escaped. He must have accompanied his retainers.”

“ How say ye ? Buccleugh taen aff wi’ his clanjamfray ? I’m glad o’ that too. I’ll be nae mair fashed about him.”

“ But he was a prisoner, Sire. He had just been arrested by Sir John Carmichael.”

“ Weel, Sir John Carmichael can ‘arrest him again.”

“ And there is yet time, Sire. He could be retaken. May I give orders to that effect ?”

“ Ye may gie ony orders ye like, if ye’ll just let folk alane. Eh ! wow, but I’m sleepy !” and the King left no doubt of the fact, by accompanying the exclamation, by a tremendous yawn.

“But, my orders will not be obeyed, Sire. I must have some authority from your Majesty—some token. Will you give me your ring?”

Vanity was the ruling passion of James’s nature; and the word roused him.

“My ring!” said he, with a chuckling laugh. “The ring of the prophet Solomon, ye mean. Eh, man, I ken where ye gat that. That’s frae the Talmud. There’s some queer stories in’t. Tell the Queen wha Zuleika was.”

“But the ring, Sire? the ring? There is not a moment to be lost. Will you give me the ring?”

The renewed application was not so graciously received as its predecessor. James was in that most changeful of moods, produced by wine and sleep, when mirth and anger follow close on each other’s heels, and irritation was now in the ascendant; for he wrung the jewel from his finger, and flinging it at Bowes, said in a tone of intense disgust,

“Tak it, and be aff wi’ ye. I’m sick o’ the very sicht o’ ye.”

“And if,” said his persevering petitioner,

“if the Lord Warden be captured, what is to be done with him?”

“Do onything ye like? Mak a Lord Soulis o’ him, for aught I care. Put him in a pat, and boil him for broo. Eh! wow,” muttered the Royal martyr to himself, as, with lacklustre eyes, he followed the retiring footsteps of the Ambassador. “It’s an awfu’ warld this. There’s nae peace in’t. I’m drinking my Canary, and they bring me a chield to judge; and when I’m judging him, they set me a dancing; and when I’m dancing, they get me asleep; and when I’m sleeping, they wauk me again. And now—and now—”

What might have been the next phase of royal suffering, was unfortunately lost to posterity; for, with the words on his lips, James’s eyes closed, his head sank back into a corner of the chair, and in another minute, a loud snore proclaimed him once more in the land of dreams.

Bowes had, in the meantime, gained the outer corridor. In hurried language, he communicated to Sir John Carmichael the escape

of the prisoner, and accompanied the information with instructions to make instant efforts for his re-capture.

The old Baron drew himself up stiffly.

“Ye are the Ambassador of England, Sir Robert, but I’ve yet to learn that you have any right to give orders to the Captain of the Guard of the King of Scots.”

“Curse the formal prig!” muttered Bowes to himself; “but this is no moment to quarrel with him.”

“You mistake me, Sir John Carmichael,” said he, in his blandest tones—“mistake me utterly. I give no orders of any kind. It is for you to decide what the emergency requires. There is the King’s ring, as a warrant for your acts; but I need not hint to so sagacious a person as yourself, how utterly ruinous to the future interests of his Majesty, would be any quarrel with the English Government; and what so likely to lead to it, as a Border fray of the Lord Warden’s.”

“You are right, Sir Robert,” replied the old man, hurriedly, “and I was worse than a fool

to be mooting points of discipline at such a moment. But the lad has crossed the lake, ye say; and his people have, no doubt, gone to meet him there. That gies us a good half hour's start of him. It's lucky, too, that I told Logie to keep the men at quarters. So I'll to the Nine Stane Rigg, and will grip him as clean as a tod in a cundie."

As he spoke, the old Baron hurried to the gate of the palace, and immediately after, trumpets blew to horse, and "Boot and Saddle" was the cry. In a few minutes, the royal cavalry were paraded in the square of the little town. Their commander put himself at their head, and the whole body turning short to the left, moved off at a rapid pace, and took the road to the eastward.

The country to the south of Linlithgow, rises gently, till it terminates in a low range, stretching for many miles from east to west. The improvements in modern agriculture — the plough and the spade, with their attendant drainage and cultivation—have, at the present day, given to the tract a character of fertility, if

not of beauty. At the time of our story, however, it was an open moor. On the ascent of the hill, the ground was firm enough, but the flat surface of its summit, was a scarcely interrupted morass—where pools of water as black as Acheron, were intermingled with patches of dwarf osiers or moss. Through these meandered, at intervals, narrow strips of turf, which offered firm footing ; but they were rare, and to pursue them in safety, required that acquaintance with the character of the surface, and the colour of the herbage, which a long familiarity with such scenes alone bestows, as well as the possession of a steed, which, born and bred amid these northern solitudes, had received from nature the power of distinguishing, by touch or smell, the dangerous from the safe ground.

The moor, therefore, though affording no insecure footing to man or horse, deep in the mysteries of moss riding, was altogether impassable to the great mass of the inhabitants of the more cultivated districts, who had neither personal knowledge sufficient to enable them to

select the proper path, nor horses, whose instinct or habits could, on an emergency, eke out the deficient skill in moor-craft of their masters.

As the waste was many miles in length, and the direct route to the south lay across it, its dangerous and unstable surface would have presented a serious obstacle to traffic and travellers, had it not been traversed in its full breadth, by a ridge of moor-land. This was scarce fifty yards in breadth, but though occasionally undulating in its surface, sufficiently elevated even in its lowest parts, to afford firm footing; and along this, ran the only track, by which, for many miles, safe access could be had to the southern counties, or to England.

The ridge itself was famous in story. According to tradition, in early times, a young noble on his return from seeing his lady-love, was attacked by her father and seven brothers. The contest would have been unequal, had it not been that the assailants wore simply their hunting dresses, while the gallant had beneath

his upper clothing, a suit of Milan mail. The result, however, was a veritable tragedy ; for the lover, after successfully dealing with his opponents, himself sank dead upon the spot, exhausted by his wounds. Some obelisk-like stones, selected from the surface of the neighbouring moorland, and corresponding in number with that of the combatants, had been rudely set on end, to commemorate the death struggle ; and the wild locality which had witnessed it, received the name of the Nine-stane Rigge.

Such was the natural roadway to which Sir John Carmichael had proceeded with the royal cavalry.

The night was fine. The wind during the last half-hour had risen, and sweeping before it the clouds and rain, had left the azure vault of Heaven unbroken, save where a young moon scarce above the horizon threw her faint light over the gloomy scene. The level surface of the morass was not as yet conscious of her influence, but the ridge itself as it rose and fell in its progress to the southward, lay alternately

in light and shadow; its little elevations silvered over with the beams of the Queen of Night, while the hollows between them, untouched by the horizontal rays, were invested with a double gloom, and revealed nothing to the eye.

One of these little valleys had in earlier times been the site of a shepherd's hut or small farmhouse. The walls had disappeared, but low mounds of turf, still marked the ground they had occupied. Some efforts too, had apparently been made to give the cottage shelter, for a patch of land near it, where once perhaps a garden smiled, was still circled by some stunted mountain ashes or rowan trees—the favourite sylvan ornament of residences in a superstitious age, from their supposed efficacy in protecting those in their neighbourhood from evil spirits or witchcraft.

It was this spot which had been selected by Sir John Carmichael, for the site of his ambuscade. The low bushy timber promised to be of service in enabling him to conceal his force, and there with either flank resting on the swamp, and covering the whole extent of the

firm road-way, he awaited with calm confidence, his prey. For the experienced Captain of the Guard had come to the conclusion that as speed was Buccleugh's object, he and his party would select the Nine-stane Rigge, as the nearest access to their mountain home.

Half an hour might have thus passed, but still there was no appearance of the Borderers, and the only sound that broke the silence was the occasional whoop of the owl, or the cry of the bittern in the moss. The old man became impatient.

"Logie," said he to his subaltern, "I fear we have missed them. They must have taken the East-road. But what's this?" said he, as a low dull sound came upon the ear, "I think I hear the tread of the nags on the grass. Jump off, man, and see what ye make o't."

The young officer obeyed the order, and kneeling down, laid his head to the ground. For some time he was doubtful. Sounds seemed to rise and fall, and rise again. By degrees they became prolonged — connected ; and, at length, beyond all question, was audible the tread of advancing cavalry.

“It is them, Sir John,” said he in a whisper.
“They are coming, sure enough.”

“Into the saddle then, man, and be ready to charge. And mind ye, ride weel. There’s mair in the matter then ye think o’, and blithe will I be to hae my hand again on the shoulder o’ that young birkie.”

Logie obeyed, and the whole party, as before, sat silent and motionless. Some five minutes had thus elapsed; but the sound of approaching hoofs was no longer doubtful, and every eye was eagerly turned towards the little hill in front, whose summit, bathed in silver, stood out in bright contrast to the gloomy valley below.

At length, a single horseman was seen in relief against the sky. He drew up his steed for a minute, as if he doubted ambuscade; but every thing was silent, and he proceeded cautiously down the hill. Scarce fifty yards in his rear appeared three others, and then again behind them a close dark mass, evidently a compact body of cavalry.

The leading man had reached the bottom of the descent, when his eye caught something

which he thought suspicious, for he suddenly checked his horse. In another instant, he blew a loud shrill whistle, and hurriedly wheeling round the animal he rode, went at speed up the hill. The signal was caught and repeated by his companions in his rear, and in an instant, the whole party, as if they had been phantoms swept from the scene by the movement of a magician's wand, disappeared behind the crest of the little mound.

At the same moment, the old Knight shouted forth lustily, "Charge, lads. Down with the reivers. Ride over them horse and man," and the Royal cavalry went at full speed up the ascent. They gained its summit; but the causeway was empty. Straight before them for a quarter of a mile, stretched the little ridge, its elevated surface standing out bright in the moonlight, but on it was neither man nor horse. But upon either hand, right and left, scattered over the morass, were spectral like figures, which seemed to flit across its unstable surface, like evil spirits, in their own element.

“See to them, Sir John,” shouted young Logie. “They have taken to the bog, I’ll after them. Come lads,” continued he, “follow me in the King’s name.” And followed by some of the royal troopers, he dashed madly forward over the treacherous ground in pursuit of the flying foe.

It was in vain that their experienced commander, ordered, begged, intreated them to stop. Discipline was but loose in those days, and the anxiety to distinguish themselves was more powerful with the royal cavalry, than the mandates of their chief. But his predictions of evil were soon destined to be verified. The heavy Flemish chargers, upon which the men-at-arms were mounted, were soon floundering in the midst of the dangerous ground, and in five minutes the Royal Guard presented a disorderly mass of horses without riders, and riders without horses; while shouts and loudly articulated curses, and screams for aid, were heard at intervals, mingled, now and then, with a jeering laugh from their disappearing foemen.

“Blow the recall, boy,” said the discomfited Captain of the Guard, to the lad by his side.

“I’d give the best horse in my stable, that I had never come out on this wild goose chase. It will be the subject of what King James calls a timely jest for the next ten years.”

The order was obeyed, and the Royal troopers singly, and with difficulty made their way back to the firm ground.

In the mean time, their opponents had disappeared from sight, but still through the darkness of the night, there came upon the ear from every part of the morass, loud shrill whistles. They seemed to be replied to, for ever and anon was heard the same peculiar note which had startled the occupants of the Court of the Palace, on the occasion of the arrest of the Italian. By degrees, however, the sounds became less and less frequent, till at last they entirely died away, and there was nothing to break the silence of the night, save when the gale freshened from the south-west, and brought upon its wings, a dead dull echo, as of the tread of a compact body of horse, moving at a rapid pace to the southward.

“Ay, ay,” muttered the old Knight, to

himself. "The covey has got together again, and now that it is strong on the wing, all the falcons in the King's mews would not stop its flight. But I must back to the palace, and report the bad success of this night's work. And Logie, ye young birkie," continued he, "ye hae much to learn of the art of war; but mind ae thing. When ye can lay your hand on a wheen peeseweeps in a bog; then, and not till then, think o' charging Border Reivers on soft ground, with barbed and chaffroned Flemish *destriers*."

And having relieved his feelings, by animadverting on the blunders of his subordinate, Sir John Carmichael, collected his scattered forces, and with a crest-fallen air, took his way slowly back to Linlithgow.

CHAPTER XII.

THE GATHERING.

WE must leave the veteran Captain of the Guard to excuse, as he best might, his failure to his master, and follow the Lord Warden and his party.

On the banks of the Sark, and about four miles within the Scottish frontier, still stand the remains of a small square building, called Morton Tower. It was a fief of the Lords of Buccleugh, and was used as a hunting residence. Such, at least, was the title it generally bore, though it is probable, that it was indebted for the frequent visits of its proprietors—the hereditary Wardens of the West Marches—less to their passion for the chase, than to the

vicinity of their stronghold to the English Border, and the consequent facilities which it offered, of procuring early intelligence of hostile movements, or executing schemes of sudden reprisal. With this view, it had ever been carefully maintained, and at the time of our story, was receiving additions and repairs, under the superintendence of Will Tait—that cousin of the Laird's Jock, who has been mentioned in a former chapter.

Such was the spot selected by Buccleugh, as the trysting-place, or rendezvous for the meeting of his retainers.

It was towards evening, on the third day after the events narrated in the last chapter. For a week previously, the rain had fallen heavily, but the weather had cleared up about mid-day; and though there were still clouds in the sky, the sun shone brightly from the heavens, and gave a momentary character of animation and beauty to the afternoon of a November day.

On the highest battlement of the castle, floated the standard of Buccleugh, while around were

scattered groups of armed men, about three hundred in number. The larger portion wore a jack, or breast-plate, and iron head-piece; but not a few contented themselves with the buff-coat, and broad-brimmed hat, which formed the general costume of the swordsmen of the period, and which, stained, worn, and occasionally in rents, added to the reckless appearance of the wearers.

On the open ground, which environed the little fortalice, were their horses. Some few were picquetted, or attached by a head-rope, or fetlock, to the spot; but the larger number, having shackles on their fore legs, wandered at will, busily employed in contests with their new four-footed acquaintances, or in cropping the herbage near them.

In the immediate neighbourhood of the Castle, half a dozen turf fires had been lighted, and round these were congregated some of the wild-looking partizans; while, at two of a larger size than the rest, was preparing their evening meal. Over each fire, three peoles had been bound into a triangle, similar to those

used for raising weights ; and from their point of junction, was suspended the hide of a newly-slaughtered bullock, the skin of the four legs being tied together, so as to form the hide into a bag. The simple cauldron was half filled with water, while the other half was occupied by the flesh of the animal itself, which was thus, in fact, boiled in its own skin.

The mode of cookery was one commonly adopted by the Scotch Borderers, in their incursions into England, and had been resorted to upon the present occasion, as the resources of the Castle kitchen were too limited to afford the means of furnishing a meal to so large a party. The cellar, however, seemed better stored, for several casks of ale had been broached, and their contents were now served out to the eager and thirsty applicants.

From time to time, too, their numbers received increase ; for, ever and anon, down the gullies to the east and north, might be seen groups of three or four horsemen riding at speed. These, as they reached the camping ground, with the practised hand of men who were ac-

customed to make the most of their opportunities, lost not an instant in freeing their horses from their bridles and accoutrements, and putting the shackles on their forelegs; while they themselves hurried to the cauldrons, or the beer-barrel, and did their best to provide against any possible future absence of creature comforts, by laying in '*provand*.'

In the interior of the tower itself, and in its principal apartment, sat two cavaliers, the chiefs of the brigand-like force. In dress, they differed little from their subordinates. Like the rest, they wore jacks or breast-plates, with the addition merely of sleeves of linked mail, and steel gloves; but their broad-brimmed plumed beavers—their boots of Spanish leather—the richness of their buff coats, all marked their superior wealth and rank.

A table was before them, well-furnished with comfitures and wine-flasks, and at its head sat the elder of the two, a man about seventy. His beard floated to his girdle, but age had not quenched the fire of his clear black eye. It was Auld Wat, as he was termed—the Laird

of Harden, Buccleugh's wisest counsellor, and the most politic leader of his clan. The other was Sir Gilbert Elliot, of Stobbs, a hereditary ally of the house of Branksome. But, though the liquor was abundant, there was little of the hilarity of a convivial meeting in the faces of the tenants of the chamber, for each looked grave and anxious.

"It is strange," said the chairman, addressing his companion, "that Buccleugh comes not. In two hours more, the sun will be down; and it would be well if we had these fellows in something like order before dark."

"Stranger still," replied the party addressed, "that he should have sent us no intimation of the purpose for which we are called together."

"No bad policy in that. Lad though he be, the Warden is wise beyond his years; and he guessed, perchance, that a secret entrusted to many, was like to be no secret at all."

"True enough; but I should, nevertheless, have been well pleased if I could have guessed the reason of our summons. What say you?"

“Nay, I confess it is beyond me, unless it has something to do with this seizure of Kinmont Willie.”

“Possibly enough. But what said the Laird’s Jock?”

“Merely this: that when he left Linlithgow, the Warden had just been arrested by the Captain of the Guard.”

“But we have had advices since, that he arrived last night, at Branksome.”

“True; but why he was arrested, or how he got out of the scrape, I know nothing. So, I suspect we must e’en leave it to himself to explain. Be it what it will, I would he were here; for the sun is sinking fast; and whatever be his intentions, there must be something to be done that will need daylight. But hark!” said he. “That must be he at last.”

As he spoke, a wild cheer was heard from the bands without, and Harden and his guest hurried to the window. It was, in fact, as he had suspected. Slowly descending a gully to the north-east, was seen a party of about twenty horse; and as the rays of the setting

sun struck bright on the *cortège*, every figure was visible.

At its head, and alone, rode the Lord Warden, while behind, three deep, came his retainers. They moved slowly, and with the air of men who were anxious to keep their horses as fresh as possible. As Buccleugh approached the little knoll upon which the Tower stood, cauldron and beer barrel were deserted, and the rude soldiery forming in groups upon either side, cheered him eagerly as he passed. Many were the recognitions by nod, or laugh, or word, which were interchanged by the chief and his clansmen, and loud and prolonged was once more the shouting, as he alighted at the hall-door and disappeared within the portal. His immediate attendants, however, instead of following the example of their predecessors, and unsaddling their horses, contented themselves with removing their bridles, and attaching to each animal's head a nose-bag well filled with oats, as if prepared to expect orders for some sudden movement.

Buccleugh in the mean time had ascended to

the chamber occupied by his chief councillor and his ally. The consultation was protracted, as if difficulties had occurred which had not hitherto suggested themselves. At length, however, trumpets blew to horse; and in a quarter of an hour, such was the effect of discipline and long habit, the scattered groups were arranged in three long lines, every man standing at his horse's head. A bale of linen cloth, produced from the repositories of the Castle store-room, and torn into ribbons, was distributed amongst the men, who were instructed to bind one of the shreds round their left arm. Some horses, employed on the adjacent farm, were then brought to the door of the Castle, and fitted with pack saddles. On six of these were placed some of the ladders which had been used by the masons, in the repair of the building; a seventh was loaded with pinches or iron levers; and as soon as these had been properly secured, the whole of the party defiled from the gate of the Castle.

The way was led by Hobbic Noble, the English outlaw. At his back, rode the Three Spears of

Spylaw. Behind, and at some distance, were sixty horse, led by the Knight of Stobbs. Then followed the pack animals with the ladders and the iron levers; and last of all in files of three deep, came the main body under the command of Buccleugh himself, and the Laird of Harden.

Shortly after leaving the old tower, the sun went down. The rain too, once more began to fall heavily; and under the influence of the thickening drops, the last glimmers of twilight speedily disappeared. The increasing gloom, however, offered no obstacle to the way-farers, for Hobbie Noble and the Three Spears, who formed the advanced guard, were as familiar, at midnight as at mid-day, with the dangerous morasses through which they moved, and pursued their course at a steady pace, turning right or left, and taking high ground or gully, as their experience dictated to them the safest path. Behind came the rest of the band, following in Indian file, and copying with careful accuracy the maze-like movements of those preceding them.

A four miles' march brought them to the

Esk. The rain of the past week had swelled its waters, but the river is no large one, and it was crossed without much difficulty, though with a delay of half an hour, as the ford was narrow, and it was necessary not to crowd the passing men.

On gaining the further side, the invading force stood on English ground. As precautions were now requisite, a dozen horsemen were thrown out on front and flank to act as scouts, having a wisp of straw twisted round their spear-heads, to enable them to give a signal during the night. Instructions were then issued to the troopers to preserve a strict silence, and as soon as they had once more been got into order, the long file moved like a great snake up the bank, and was speedily lost amid the darkness.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE TRIAL.

ABOUT the same hour that Buccleugh and his retainers, started on their hostile expedition, Lord Scrope returned to the Castle of Carlisle. It had been his intention to have regained the fortress, which was the seat of his vice-royalty, on the preceding day ; but at the period of our story, there was no road connecting the Solway and the North Sea, and the swampy region which lies between them, difficult at all times to the traveller, had become nearly impassable from the rains, which during the week had fallen heavily on both sides of the Border.

He had already learned that his instructions to his Deputy had been successfully carried out,

and that the moss-trooper was safe in hold ; and it had been his intention to have brought him to trial, on the morning after his return. But these plans were destined to be changed. On reaching the Castle, he found waiting for him, a letter from Sir Robert Bowes. It had been written some days previously — immediately indeed after the arrival of Euphame Cranstown, and acquainted Lord Scrope with the fact that great efforts were making to induce the King to interfere. Sir Robert added, that he would use his best endeavours to prevent any movement upon the part of James, but as it was impossible to speculate with certainty, on the line of action which might possibly be adopted, by a person so capricious as the Scotch Sovereign, he recommended it as an act of prudence, to anticipate any decision on his part by executing, without delay, justice on the prisoner.

The intelligence conveyed was embarrassing. It was evident that Willie had found the means of addressing himself to powerful allies, and their interposition, if obtained, might be attend-

ed with danger. Uncertain what to do, Lord Scrope betook himself to his private chamber, and there, for two long hours did he pace with agitated steps, its narrow bounds.

And what were the feelings and the occupations of his captive. For a week, Willie had been a prisoner, and yet not altogether a solitary one; for the tedious hours had been relieved by the companionship of his jailers. To say the truth, the lad was a favourite with the rough soldiery. His gallantry—his gentle birth—his bold bearing—his generous nature, had all won him friends. Nor did his wild life in any degree detract from his popularity. The manners of the time permitted, if they did not approve, the exploits of the moss-trooper; and a distinguished Border-rider was as much a subject of admiration amongst his fellows of the Marches, as an adventurous free-lance, in the days of Hawkwood or Du Guesclin.

From such sources he had accordingly, from time to time, been made acquainted with any thing of interest that found its way to the castle.

A messenger from Kinmont had brought the information of the departure of his grandmother for the Court. From Bowes's courier he had obtained the news of her arrival at Linlithgow; while the delay in the return of Lord Scrope, had also, been good-naturedly communicated to the captive, as well as his subsequent appearance at nightfall.

The last event was ominous enough, but still, as Willie's supper had been served at the usual time, he had come to the conclusion, that his trial would be postponed to the succeeding day—a matter the more agreeable, as every hour's delay added to the chance of some successful effort being made for securing his safety.

Whence that safety was to spring, he knew not, and scarce attempted to guess. Of the proceedings in his favour at Linlithgow, he was of course, utterly ignorant. All that he had learned, was that his grandmother had reached the Court, and she herself had intimated her intention of appealing to the King, and winning, if possible, his intercession in favour of her grandson. The foundation was little to build on; for

the young Borderer was well acquainted with James's prejudices against himself. But still, even in spite of the unwilling memories, Hope would whisper of future liberty; and where is the ear so dull as not to listen to its voice? From these blissful dreams, he was awakened by the appearance of his jailor.

"What's this o't, Christie," said he, as the trap-door opened overhead, "hae ye got ony news for me?"

"'Deed, Willie, I have, and no good ones. My Lord has come back."

"Ye hae telled me that already."

"Yes, but he has ordered you for trial."

"Ye might hae left that news till the morn. Time eneugh for't when the hour comes."

"And the hour's come now, and that's the reason that I am sent to warn ye."

"Ay, man, is that the way o't. Then I doubt that Hairibee's the word at sunrise."

"Faith, I fear it, Willie. But you must come now, for my Lord's waiting."

As he spoke, he dropped the ladder into the pit, and the prisoner mounted it as fast as

his shackled limbs would permit, and escorted by two or three of the jailors, proceeded to the court-yard.

If the moment was one of painful interest to the principal person in the drama, another actor in it was not without anxieties. From a feeling of personal irritation, Lord Scrope had originally given orders for the arrest of the moss-trooper. Those orders had been successfully executed; but, notwithstanding, as the consequences of his precipitation began to display themselves more fully to his view, he already half regretted the act.

A judge of the law, he had himself violated it. On the Border, as has already been mentioned, it was a principle established by custom and statute, that from the dawn of the day appointed for a March meeting, till the following sunrise, the inhabitants of either kingdom, whatever might be their previous offences, were free from arrest; and yet, in defiance of this, William Armstrong had been systematically entrapped during the continuance of the truce, and carried off as a prisoner.

At another period, the English Warden would have felt indifference as to the comments on his conduct. So long as the two kingdoms were in a state of active or passive hostility, there was little to fear from the anger of Elizabeth, and nothing from that of a hostile monarch. But times were changed—the Queen was in extreme old age: the King of Scots was understood to be her probable successor. What was worse still, Cecil was believed to be deep in the interest of his future master. To bring, therefore, the young Borderer to the scaffold, was to incur the probable risk of displeasing one sovereign, without the certainty of meeting the approbation of the other. Such were the horns of the dilemma. Uncertain how to act, and unwilling alike to incur the obloquy of restoring Kinmont Willie to liberty, or of putting him to death in the ordinary off-hand fashion used in making away with Border marauders, Lord Scrope came, at length, to the conclusion, that the only mode of protecting himself from the consequences of his indiscretion

was to incur the risk of bringing the moss-trooper to trial ; but by giving a more than ordinary solemnity to the judicial proceedings, to enlist national pride and national feelings in his own favour.

With this end, the garrison was put under arms. The great gate which led from the outer ward into the town had been, according to custom, closed and barred at sundown ; but that which connected the inner with the outer ward, still remained open. The portcullis was raised, the drawbridge over the inner fosse lowered, and from this to the dungeon, which, for the last week, had been the residence of the prisoner, extended a double line of soldiery bearing torches at intervals. Between their ranks, Willie was now led to the Judgment Hall. Slowly did he make his way through the serried files, crossed the bridge, and passed beneath the gloomy gateway. Slowly and painfully too did he, turning to the right, mount the steep slope which led to the gate of the donjon tower. On reaching it, a moment's delay was

permitted, to enable him to recover his fatigues ; that over, he was introduced into the great hall of the castle.

Seldom did the room present so brilliant an appearance. By day, its narrow windows admitted jets of light, which, shooting through the darkness, seemed by the contrast to make even more gloomy the vaulted space. Now, however, as if in mockery of the solemn scene that was to be enacted within it, the chamber had almost the character of gaiety. Upon the dais, was placed a chair of state, on which sat the Lord Warden in person. On his right and left stood the seneschal, and some of the principal citizens of Carlisle ; while behind, in their richest dresses, were the officers of his household. Around, in complete mail, were marshalled forty of the garrison, each bearing a torch ; and between them and the wall thronged the inferior domestics of the vice-regal court.

Such was the scene that met the eyes of the young Borderer, as he emerged from the darkness. For an instant, the glare of light, and it might be a sinking of the heart, dulled his

vision ; but the feeling, whatever its cause, was but momentary, and it was with a calm and self-collected expression that he took his place on the spot allotted to him.

The Warden and the prisoner looked at each other. On the part of Lord Scrope, there was something of curiosity in the gaze. With Willie's appearance, he was not altogether unfamiliar, for he had seen him on the occasion of that visit to Carlisle, which we have already recorded ; but he had retained nothing but a general idea of his outline and features. There was now an opportunity for a more prolonged scrutiny, and carefully and with an observant eye, he viewed him from head to heel.

The Borderer was in no degree abashed by the examination. On the contrary, he returned the gaze with his bright, blue, fearless eye. The fetters, indeed, were on his limbs, but there was nought else—nothing in look or bearing, that would have suggested to the spectator that he was in bonds.

Lord Scrope spoke at length.

“ Well, Willie. The rat is in the trap at last.”

“Ye are a grand gentleman, my Lord,” was the reply, “and nae doubt wale your words weel. Ye have trapped in the house, what ye never would hae ta’en on the hill side.”

“Ha ! my friend Willie, you are bitter on us ; but in your present situation we can excuse bitterness. You are ashamed of being here.”

“Shamed ? Fient a bit I. When Queen Mary crossed ower to Cumberland, yer father lockit her up in this Castle of Carlisle. She cam like me o’ her ain free will. She was keepit like me a prisoner ! And it’s just an honour for a poor lad like mysel’, that a Lord Scrope should treat me as a Lord Scrope treated the Queen of Scots.”

The English Warden coloured even to the temples. There was no more sore subject in the family annals, than their connection with the entanglement of the unfortunate Mary. It brought with it little honour. It was like to bring less profit ; for it was whispered that the future Sovereign of England might be disposed to exact heavy penalties from the over zealous officials who had suggested, or ministered to the

vengeance of his predecessor. Lord Scrope, however, speedily recovered himself, and in a voice which affected good temper, he replied.

“What, angry, Willie, at the plotting that brought you here? But the anger is misplaced, man. Three score entries in the Castle books prove that you are our foeman, and in dealing with a foeman, plotting is excusable.”

“And for which, my Lord, of my many offences, do I stand here now. I had thought that the chalk of them had been washed off the board. At the March Court, this time year, they were compounded by the Scotch Warden, and I was a free man.”

“No, no, Willie. One still remains. You have forgotten the grey horse from Barbary, and the brown colt.”

“What, the twa yauds that I took from the stable at the foresters?”

“Precisely. What do you say to them? Answer me that.”

“I’ll do that, my Lord, if you’ll first answer me this:—What took ye that night to Tam Dixon’s?”

Lord Scrope gave a slight start, for there came across his mind the recollection of Bowes, and their perilous interview.

“This is insolence,” said he, in a haughty tone. “What matters it, why I had gone to the hostelry?”

“Nay, if ye winna tell that, will ye say what ye were ganging to do with the twa naigs, if I had na put the halters on them. Was it no’ your intention to hae warned the Captain of Bewcastle, and your prickers here, to hae grippit me.”

“And if it were so, could I have employed them better?”

“That may be your opinion. It’s no mine. So I clapped the rapes ower their head to prevent ye. And I had the richt to do sae, for, as your Lordship said weel but now, ‘In dealing with a foeman, plotting is excusable.’”

There was a titter round the hall, which not even the presence of the dreaded dignitary could restrain. It evidently produced irritation, for, with a voice of thunder, the Warden commanded silence; and abandoning at once the

half jocular tone which he had hitherto assumed, he turned, with a grave air, to his captive.

“William Armstrong, of Kinmont,” said he, in a low, cold tone, which ill dissembled the storm raging within, “hear me. For five long years, you have been the unceasing enemy of the subjects of her Majesty, my gracious Mistress, the Queen of England. You have plundered their goods, stolen their horses, driven off their cattle, and on this very night, have confessed to abstracting two animals of great value—my own personal property. You tell me, that your former offences have been condoned. I doubt if any compounding should put you beyond the arm of the law; but, even if it were so, for this last offence you can plead no such remission. What reason, then, can you give, why you should not pay the penalty of your offence?”

Willie looked embarrassed for a minute, and scratched his head.

“Faith, my Lord,” said he, at length, “I’ll no fash ye with my reasons; for when you trapped me at Kershope-Foot, ye had settled

my dooming afore hand ; and had I the tongue of an angel, it wad na help me. So do what ye are permitted to do, and I'll no stay ye. I'll but say this, that ye hae broken March law, by taking me as ye hae ta'en me ; and I'm thinking, that before you've got the hank wound aff the pirl, ye'll hae mair to mell wi', forbye me."

"What!" said the Warden, with a haughty smile, "would you threaten me? That shall not prevent me discharging the duties of my office, and I do them now. You, William Armstrong, of Kinmont, in defiance of the March laws, which, at present, proclaim amity and good will between the inhabitants of two peaceful kingdoms, have, by your own confession, committed a felony; and for this offence, I judge you to be hanged to-morrow, at sunrise."

"Weel, my Lord," said the young moss-trooper, in a tone of nonchalance, for his iron nerves continued to support him, "it maun, I suppose, be as you say. But if, instead of being now with airns on my legs, in the Castle o' Carlisle, I had been on the red mear's back,

you, and the next batch of heifers at the Soceries, wad hae seen me again."

"Nay, that is a pleasure that I still promise myself. Ere we part, to-morrow, I shall bid you farewell."

"Will ye, my Lord?" said the Borderer, with a gay laugh. "Weel, we north-country folk ken manners as well as you grand gentry in Carlisle, and I'll no be behind hand wi' yer Lordship. By day, or by night, in hold, or outside o't, I'll promise ye I'll no leave ye, without doing ye a like courtesy."

The words were spoken in a jocular tone; but the flashing eye, the curled lip, and the figure drawn up to its full height, all expressed defiance.

Lord Scrope understood them. For a moment, it seemed as if he would have replied; but by a strong effort, he mastered the rising passion, and, probably afraid that his dignity might be compromised by further altercation with his captive, threw himself back haughtily in his chair.

"Guard," said he, in a calm tone, "remove

the prisoner; and Salkeld," continued he, addressing his lieutenant, "let the execution take place at sunrise. I dissolve the Court."

He rose as he spoke, and left the chamber by a door behind the chair of state.

As soon as the Warden had departed, the crowded auditory fell back on either side, to make way for the prisoner. With embarrassed step, for the heavy fetters confined his limbs, but with bearing as erect, and eye as bright as ever, Willie was led forth. In a few minutes the court-yard was traversed, the iron gate opened, the trap raised, and the captive was again in his dungeon.

The lad sought his pallet. In the lighted hall, and before his great enemy, the excitement of the moment—the present crowd—the glance of admiration, or of sympathy, all had contributed to support him. Eye had not quailed, pulse had not quivered, the limbs had retained their vigour, the nerves their tone. But now in silence and in solitude, despondency gradually stole over him, and the hopes which in spite of himself had cheered him during the previous week, one by one vanished away.

“Weel,” said he to himself, “I whiles thocht that they wad hae done something to get me out of this black-hole, but I suppose its’ no to be, and I maun just mak up my mind till’t. Sae I’ll try if I canna get a sleep. It maun be six hours to sunrise, and they wad seem unco lang anes to a waking man.”

With the words, he stretched himself on his rough couch, but it was for some time in vain. At length, exhausted nature resumed her rights, and he slept.

Something more than an hour had elapsed, when his slumbers were suddenly broken, and as far as the thick walls of his dungeon permitted him to guess, by a blast of trumpets. Willie started, in a moment, to his feet, and listened. Whatever was the nature of the summons, it had been apparently as unexpected by his jailers as himself, for hurried steps were heard above. Then came on his ear the cries of men shouting ; and then the echoes of violent and repeated blows, as if some one were attempting to break open the iron door of the outer prison.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE RESCUE.

WE must return to Buccleugh and his party. On leaving the Esk, they moved at a slow pace across what was called the Debateable land. It was a district little tenanted, and the continued rain by forcing even the more reckless of its population within doors, gave increased solitude to the solitary locality, and the invading force passed on unnoticed and unquestioned.

At length, about midnight, they reached the high ground, on the North bank of the Eden. Below, the sullen roar of the river made itself heard distinctly. A watch fire was burning by the gate house, which formed the defences of the bridge. Beyond it, in the town itself,

might be seen at intervals a glimmer of light, while further to the right, loomed the dark mass of the Castle, and its outworks.

Upon these heights, the leading files, according to previous orders, arrested their steps, and waited till the main body had closed up. Buccleugh then with an anxious eye, scanned the scene below.

“The river,” said he, “at length is in high flood, and I fear it will empty some of our saddles. But we must venture it. It is too great a risk to force the bridge. The escape of a watchman or the discharge of an arquebuss would set castle and town awake in a moment—so we must risk it, I say. You, Sir Gilbert,” said he, addressing himself to the Knight of Stobbs, “will remain here with sixty horse. If anything goes wrong, we shall have Scrope’s lances out to cut off our retreat, and it will not do to be caught like a rat in a trap. If they make across the bridge, fling them in the river, and should they be too strong for you, let your scouts give the signal, by firing the peat on their spear-heads. As for you, my old friend,” continued

he, turning to the white-bearded warrior by his side, "I think it would be well if you remained with Elliott, for the river sounds angry to night, and at three score and ten, a man is better in a dry saddle than a wet one."

"Tush—tush, my Lord," said Harden laughing, "I must take the water with the rest. You could not get on without me. It will need a cool head like mine to keep the lads back, for we have got a wheen devil's buckies amangst them, and there's as much mischief from men being too far forward as too far back."

"Be it so then," said the commander, "let us go."

He turned as he spoke, and whispered some instructions to Hobbie Noble, and the outlaw, in obedience to his orders, turned his horse's head to the right, and moved to the westward.

For about half a mile, he kept the crest of the ridge, and then stopped suddenly.

"We must try it here, my Lord," said he. "Do you observe the ground sinking gently to the left. It is a gully that leads down to the water's edge, and, for about twenty yards there

is access to the river. Above and below, the bank is perpendicular, and it would be impossible for a man on foot, far less on horseback, to approach the water."

"But the opposite side? Is there good landing?"

"The best possible. The Soceries are hardly above the bed of the river, and the horses will take the ground easily."

"It is well; so follow me, my lads," said the Warden, turning to his men, "and remember, no crowding, and not a word. Living or drowling, I'll cut the throat of any man that raises his voice above a whisper."

So saying, he descended the narrow gully, and approached the river. Its white water stood out clear, even in the darkness, and might have appalled a less determined force. But Buccleugh plunged in, and was followed by the whole of his troop. Such, however, was the strength of the current, that they were carried considerably down the stream, before they could make good their landing. At length, nevertheless, all reached in safety the opposite

bank, and as soon as the scattered files had been re-formed, they moved up the stream, and crossing the little river Caday, drew up in a meadow below the Castle walls.

Eighty of the men were here ordered to dismount, and leaving their horses with their comrades, to advance on foot up the Caday, to the western side of the Castle. The old Laird of Harden was left with the remaining force, to cover, if necessary, the attack.

In the mean time, Buccleugh and his party moved towards the walls.

It has been mentioned that the Castle of Carlisle was built on the summit of a steep hill. The ground, though free from rock, was nearly perpendicular. Up this ascent toiled Buccleugh and his party. There was nothing to oppose their progress. The bad weather had driven the watch under cover. With palpitating hearts did they apply the ladders to the wall. Unhappily, they were too short. Allowance had not been made for the fall of the ground, and the turf sloping rapidly from the base of the stone battlements, nearly

doubled, to those who sought to gain the top by escalade, the height of the defences. Again and again did the men, cautiously mounting to the summit, attempt to touch the coping. Their efforts were vain. The longed-for crest was above their grasp, and they retired in despair to the foot of the bank.

“It’s no use, Jock,” said Buccleugh to his henchman. “We must try the postern. Bring up the pinches, and Will Tait, and the mason lads. We must see what the bolts and hinges are worth.”

And followed by his men, he made his way to a small door, which occupied the centre of the western wall of the outer court-yard, and gave the garrison access to the Caday.

Once more the party climbed the turfy bank, and applying the levers gently to the edge of the door, endeavoured to force it off its hinges. It was to no purpose. The iron-studded gate resisted all their efforts. Buccleugh would have renewed the exertions, but Hobbie Noble, who had joined them, whispered to him :

“I fear it will not do, my Lord. Were bolts and hinges both gone, the door’s as safe as ever. There are three iron bars across it, and I know them well, for your Lordship may remember that I was once a part of the Castle guard.”

“And what is to be done, then?” said Buccleugh, in despair. “Are we to abandon the poor young fellow to his fate?”

“I fear it must be so. And yet, now I bethink me, something might be done with the flag below. If it could be wrenched out, a man might get under the gate.”

The plan suggested seemed a desperate one, for the block of freestone, upon which the door rested, was some two feet thick, and four long, and it seemed hopeless to think of removing such a mass. However, it was the only chance that remained, and Buccleugh determined that the attempt should be made. Accordingly, the masons were ordered up, and it was explained to them, in a whisper, what was wanted. They shook their heads doubtingly, but as their master’s commands were imperative, began their work.

Fortunately, the labour was less severe than they had anticipated. The stone, as Hobbie Noble informed them, had been but lately introduced into its place, and the mortar had not, as yet, acquired a sufficient degree of hardness to give it tenacity. Bit by bit, with their chisels, did they clear away the lime from below, and from the sides. Bit by bit, too, did they hollow, upon either hand, a bed for their levers. At length, everything was prepared for the essay; the pinches were introduced; and half-a-dozen men, lending their whole weight to the effort, endeavoured to wrench forward the stone.

For some time, they made no progress, though the workmen were changed frequently, and their deep breathing and dripping foreheads bore evidence of the intensity of their exertions. At length, as hope was leaving them, the stone appeared to stir. Such, at least, was the opinion of the master mason, Will Tait, and though its correctness was disputed, it gave rise to fresh exertions. At length, even the most sceptical confessed that the huge mass projected a quarter of an inch

from its bed. Their progress became now more rapid. The relays of workmen were frequently changed. Fresh and eager hands swarmed from below, and, at length, after half-an-hour's incessant labour, the huge mass slid out upon the turf.

For an instant there was a pause ; and then Dicky of Dryhope, as the smallest of the party, was instructed to creep in, and ascertain the character of the ground beyond. Fortunately, it was nothing but the earth and gravel of the the court-yard. This was speedily cleared away by Dicky's dagger ; and the moss-trooper returned to report that there was free access to the great court.

At that moment, the clocks of the town struck two, and then through the heavy rain might be heard the sound of approaching feet.

"They are going to change the guard," said Buccleugh. "We must wait till all is still."

Apparently the opinion was correct. A body of men was heard approaching. The challenge was given and replied to. Then was heard the sound of retreating footsteps, and then once more, all was silent.

“Now lads,” said the Lord Warden, as he summoned round him his whole force. “We must have a try for it. Let every man put his dagger in his teeth, and you, Dicky, lead the way.”

Once more the Borderer disappeared under the gateway. He was rapidly followed by his companions, and without much difficulty they gained the interior. As yet there was no opposition, for the storm had driven the guards to cover, and the intruders were unremarked.

It was when about twenty had entered, that the watchmen became first aware of the presence of enemies, and gave the alarm: but scarcely had the words passed from their lips, when they were overpowered by numbers, and made prisoners. Almost at the same moment, Hobbie Noble and the masons made their way under the gate, and removed the three cross-bars which had so successfully resisted their first efforts. To force the lock and lift the postern from its hinges, was then an easy task, and the whole party rushed into the castle.

“Now, Jock,” said the Warden, “take

twenty of the lads, and keep by the gate to make good our retreat. As for you, Hobbie, you know the prison well. So be off with twenty more, and get Willie out of the stone room as fast as may be. Away, Dicky, to the Laird of Harden, and tell him to advance his men up to the Irish gate. We'll have the town bands out upon us in a jiffey. As for myself, I will face the great gateway of the inner ward in case Lord Scrope may wish to break a lance."

He waited for a few minutes, as if to give time to his subordinates to execute their instructions, and then turned to the two trumpeters who were at his back.

"Blow me the *reveillée*, lads," said he. "Let us bid the good folks of Carlisle good morrow to their night caps."

Hitherto, there had been deep silence. The very outcries of the watchmen had excited comparatively little attention, for they had been seized and gagged almost before they had uttered a word. But the blast of the Scottish trumpets dispelled the charm. They were instantly replied to by the Laird of Harden's from

the meadows below. Those of Sir Gilbert Elliot on the other side of the river, took up the strain. In an instant after, the great beacon on the top of the castle burst into a blaze of light, the drums of the town bands beat furiously, the bells of the cathedral rang with a fierce and angry peal, and were replied to by those of the collegiate churches, and the moot-hall. North, and east, and south, the Border beacons at Rangham, and Brampton, and Penrith, and Skiddaw burst into flame; and heads were stretched from a thousand windows; and half-dressed mobs rushed through the streets; and women shrieked, and men swore; and high above the rattle of the drums, and the clang of bells, might be heard the shouts of the terrified townsfolk—"The Scots—the Scots!"

In the meantime, the party headed by Hobbie Noble, had made their way to the prison for the purpose of freeing the captive. Many were well acquainted with its interior, but the access to it was no such easy task as they had hoped. The under story had neither door nor window. The iron grating which gave admission to it,

from the rampart, was too strong to be forced, and the jailors, on the first alarm had fled, carrying with them the keys.

There was not a moment, however, to be lost. The garrison of Carlisle consisted of two thousand men, and if by any accident, Lord Scrope should become acquainted with the small number of the assailants, it would be easy for him to overwhelm them at once, by attacking them from the inner ward, and from the gates of the town. On failing, therefore, to force the door, it was determined to effect an entrance through the roof, and for this purpose ladders were brought from the outside. By placing one on the rampart, they easily mounted to the top of the low building, and cutting through its leaden covering gained access to the ward-room below. From this, it may be recollected opened the door that led into the moss-trooper's cell. The trap was raised.

"How's a' wi' ye, Willie Armstrong," said a voice from above.

"Wha's that?" said the astonished Borderer.

“ Can ye no tell ?”

“ It’s the deevil, or Red Rowan.”

A hearty laugh proclaimed the correctness of a portion, at least, of the moss-trooper’s guess.

“ Ay, lad !” said Willie ; “ I kenned yer nicher brawly, but what in the foul fiend’s name are ye doing here ?”

“ Can ye no tell that either, man. Ye’re no ower gleg at the uptak the day. The Blue Bonnets are ower the Border.”

“ No possible.”

“ Possible enugh, and mair by token, they hae won the outer ward of the Castle of Carlisle.”

“ Ye’re daffin.”

“ Fact as death. Div ye no hear the Scottish trumpets ?”

At that moment—for according to Buccleugh’s orders, it continued to be played at intervals—the *reveilée* came upon the ear. Willie listened. The broken roof, and open door, gave distinctness to the music. He instantly recognised the familiar notes, and doubted no longer.

“ Won the Castle of Carlisle !” shouted he

in tones of extravagant jubilation. "There has been nae sic deed of vaillance since Wallace days. Won the Castle of Carlisle! ho! ho! ho! Won the Castle o' Carlisle! ha! ha! ha!" and as if no longer able to find a vent for his excitement in words, the moss-trooper started off in a *pas seul*, which, to confess the truth was less remarkable for its grace, than its energy.

His evolutions were contemplated with anything but admiration by his astonished countryman.

"Saw ye ever the like o' that!" muttered he to himself. "To be flinging on the floor to the clatter o' his ain music, and the Warden waiting for him. Put the tow about your waist you young fule," shouted he, "and that instantly. My certie, billy, if ye dinna mak the mair speed, ye may hae it round your neck yet."

It might be that the heavy iron shackles on the legs of the Borderer, had made the dancing exhausting to him, or that he felt the necessity of complying with the wishes of his companion, for with a concluding capriole, which, had the

darkness permitted its being witnessed, would have softened even the critical soul of Red Rowan, he attached himself to the rope, and was raised to the room above.

“And now, Willie, my man,” said the friendly Borderer. “I must get ye on my back, for we hae na a minute to lose. In anither half hour the place will be ower het for us. So we maun be aff.”

“No yet,” said Willie, “I hae a tryst to keep. I promised, ere I leave him, to bid Lord Scrope fareweel.”

“Are ye gane clean mad, man?”

“Mad or no, ye maun tak’ me to the Captain’s window, or I wunna gang.”

“Weel—weel! A wilfu’ man maun hae his way,” and with the words he proceeded with his burden to the great gate, that led into the inner ward.

It may be recollected that over this gateway, were the quarters of the Seneschal, or what was termed the Captain’s lodging. It was the same room which had witnessed the interview between Lord Scrope and Salkeld, previous to

the departure of the former for Berwick, and was furnished with cross-lights, one looking into the inner, the other, across the fosse, on the outer court-yard. To this chamber, Lord Scrope had betaken himself on the first alarm, in the hope of being able to gain some information with regard to the enemy who had so unexpectedly taken possession of the outer ward of his fortress. It was while thus gazing anxiously through the open window, that he saw approach Kinmont Willie mounted upon the shoulders of his stalwart ally. Two or three of his countrymen had lighted torches, and attached themselves to the moss-trooper, for the purpose of giving additional solemnity to his exit; and by their glare the English Warden and his captive of yesterday, were both distinctly visible.

“I promised to bid you gude bye, my Lord,” said the undaunted Borderer, “and I hae keepit my word.”

“Is that you, you young scoundrel,” said the English Warden, unable to control his irritation. “Go and be hanged.”

“No the day,” replied Willie, with a chuckle. “I’m sorry to disappoint your Lordship, but our merry meeting is put off till a mair convanient season. Sae ance mair fare ye weel?”

His adieux were scarcely permitted to be concluded, for his impatient bearer had already commenced his return to the postern. As soon as he had reached it, the great object of the enterprise being now accomplished, preparations were made for departure.

Willie was carried down the steep ascent, and was placed upon the most active of the cart-horses, but side-saddle fashion; for, in the hurry, they had been unable to find the key of his fetters, and the chain connecting the two ankles forbade the usual method of riding. Once more the troop mounted, and approached the river. To facilitate their crossing, fires had been lighted at the two edges of the little valley, whose narrow confines offered the sole landing-place. Slowly and safely they made the ground, till, at length, the whole band reached the opposite bank. They mounted the gully, and on gaining the summit of the

ridge, moved as before for half a mile parallel with the town. Then, as if by a common impulse, rose the favourite Border song :

“ Wha daur meddle wi’ me ?
Wha daur meddle wi’ me ?
My name is little Jock Elliott,
And wha daur meddle wi’ me ?”

Amid the dim morning light, the spectral-like figures were eagerly watched, from housetop and window, by the affrighted townsfolk. One by one did the hostile files disappear behind the ridge, but still, as the wind lulled, there came upon the ear, though fainter and more faint, the triumphant chorus of the moss-troopers, and the wild notes of their Border song.

CHAPTER XV.

DOUBTS AND FEARS.

WE must return to Linlithgow. It can easily be understood how intense was the anxiety created in the minds of the inhabitants of the little borough, by the intelligence of Buccleugh's flight.

The King, when the following morning saw him once more free from the effects of his debauch, was inarticulate with anger. To say the truth, he had good reasons for his indignation. Any hostile inroad, on the part of the Lord Warden, into England, was likely to be attributed by Elizabeth and her subjects to the private, if not to the professed wishes of the

King of Scots, and as such, might, possibly, endanger his future throne.

Nor was the anxiety of Sir Robert Bowes less. He was the Ambassador of England. If he played his part zealously in that character, he made himself obnoxious to James and his nobles. If, on the contrary, he showed himself lax in enforcing the wrongs of his southern countrymen, he ran the risk of losing honours and office, or even, should the jealous temper of his mistress be roused to suspicion, of being committed to the Tower.

He did not, it is true, any more than James, contemplate the possibility of an attack upon the Castle of Carlisle. The idea of an attempt so desperate was too extravagant to be entertained for an instant. What he feared was, that the Lord Warden, after the manner of his forefathers, might conduct a marauding expedition into the northern counties, or, perchance, endeavour to make himself master of the person of some wealthy English landholder, to be kept as a hostage, and exchanged for the captive moss-trooper. Under any features

however, or in any form, the act of Buccleugh must necessarily be an aggressive one. As such, it would produce dissension between the rival sovereigns, and, of course, endanger those schemes of future power which depended upon their amity.

As for the parties most interested, Mary and Euphame, their feelings can be better understood. They, too, like James and the envoy of Elizabeth, were ignorant of the precise character of Buccleugh's intended enterprise. But they knew that an attempt was to be made to liberate Kinmont Willie, and any such was fraught with danger.

And yet, though the enterprise was, to both, the subject of their daily and nightly dreams, even in their visions, there was a difference. Euphame's existence was bound up in her grandson's. She had, it is true, other feelings, which like all those of her nature, were strong and fierce—her affection for her nursling—her pride in the fame and power of the haughty Border family, with which she claimed relationship—her hatred for their rival

clan ; but all were weak and insignificant, compared with her attachment to the last of her race. In contemplating, therefore, the possible success or failure of Buccleugh's enterprise, she held as nothing the consequent enmities of the two kingdoms, or even the chances of ruin, or captivity or death of the young noble, who had so generously undertaken the rescue. Old age had made her selfish ; and every thought and sensation was wrapped up in one object—the fate of her grandson. Would he be saved ? Would he not be saved ? Within these two questions was comprised the whole interest of Euphame's life.

It was not so with Mary. She loved her foster-brother well, and would willingly have sacrificed her broad lands to procure his safety. But there was another engaged in the venture, upon whom, if the truth must be confessed, Mary's thoughts rested even more frequently than on her young kinsman. She loved. From the moment that Buccleugh had taken up her cause at the instance of Lady Beatrice, and freed her from the addresses of Bowes, a re-

vulsion had taken place in her sentiments towards him. Conscience suggested that she had treated him ungraciously, almost insultingly; and her proud, generous nature was thus the more inclined to admire one, who had been ready to risk life that he might secure happiness to her to whom he owed nothing but evil. A second time he was exposing himself to danger, if not to death; and again her woman's heart whispered to her that it was for her sake.

His office was doubtless a responsible one, and he was bound by its duties to vindicate the rights of those subject to his jurisdiction. No doubt, too, he was young and kind-hearted; and the tears of Euphame might have disposed him to exert himself for her grandson; but still Mary clung to the belief that it was her intercession, and hers only, which had impelled him to undertake his present enterprise.

What that was, she knew not; but assume what form it might, it was certain to be a desperate one; and life might possibly be its price. Nay looking at it in the most favourable

point of view, the picture was gloomy enough. For even supposing that he succeeded in effecting the liberation of her foster-brother, the peril was not over. Mary had learned from the Queen that James was profoundly irritated at the Lord Warden's contempt of his positive orders ; and hints were uttered of bringing him to trial on his return ; and with the word trial were connected associations of imprisonment, and forfeiture, and ruin.

If such were the anxieties of the inhabitants of the Palace, those of the towns-folk were scarcely less agitating. To keep a secret, is difficult in a large community. It is impossible in a small one. The capture of Kinmont Willie—the visit of Euphame and Mary Ker to the Lord Warden—his arrest by Sir John Carmichael—his escape, and that of his followers—the attempt of the Royal cavalry to bar the way, and their failure ; had each and all roused the gossips from their beds, and formed the subject of conversation in every house, public and private, in the little borough. Then came hints of the gathering in the South ; and

reports of a raid upon England and attempts, in favour of Kinmont Willie ; how, when, where, was unknown, but all strengthened by the aggravating behaviour of the Warden's host, Wully Trummell. For the worthy Baillie had, for the first time in his life, found his residence invested with the character of romance, and he naturally endeavoured to make the most of his new claims to distinction, by nods, and winks and muttered sentences, as mysterious and unintelligible, and consequently as much respected as those of an ancient oracle.

While high and low, Prince and peasant, Ambassador and Maid of Honour, were thus absorbed in one object, it may easily be understood, with what feverish excitement, news were looked for from the South. For two days, nothing was learned distinctly—the tale of one hour being contradicted by that of the next. At length, came something definite. Buccleugh had marched from Morton Tower on Thursday night, and crossed the Esk at sun-down. The hostile invasion then had actually taken place. But what was its object ? What would be its

results? The public expectation grew more intense than ever. On that Friday night, few went to bed, and every eye and ear was turned to the South.

At length, about six o'clock on the Saturday morning, a courier, "bloody with spurring, fiery hot with speed," entered the town, and made for the palace. The great gate had just been opened, and the man demanded to see Lady Beatrice Ruthven. She, like the rest, had not gone to bed, and hurried to receive the messenger. He presented to her a short billet. It was in Buccleugh's hand writing, and contained these words.

"BELLA BEATRICE,

"We are once more on Scottish ground. Kinmont Willie is safe; and here. While I write this, they are filing off his fetters.

"Given at the Blacksmith's shop at Cannonby, this 15th of November in the year of our Lord, 1599.

"*Suo vero Amico.*

"W. S."

Beatrice gazed for one moment at the brief missive, and having ascertained from the man, by a few hurried questions, that the welcome news was a fact, and not a dream ; she hurried to the chamber of Mary and Euphame.

The old woman, at first, could hardly bring herself to believe in her new-born happiness ; but when assured of its reality, she sank down upon her knees and prayed. As for Mary, she flung her arms round her friend's neck, and the two young girls mingled together their smiles, and their tears.

But every picture has its shadow, as well as its sunshine, and the darker features of the landscape were now to become prominent.

Day after day passed, and still the Lord Warden returned not to Linlithgow.

The expedition, too, to Carlisle had produced its anticipated political results. Queen Bess was furious at the indignity offered to her Crown. In satisfaction for the affront, she demanded the delivery as a prisoner of the chief actor in it, or in the event of this being refused, threatened reprisals.

King James was willing to do anything the fiery tempered daughter of the Tudors desired. Rather than have risked the English succession, he would have given up the Three Estates of the kingdom in a lump; and the mere surrender of Buccleugh was a sacrifice, that demanded not a moment's consideration.

Unhappily for this easy mode of arranging the difficulty, his subjects did not share the same opinion as himself. The message of the English Queen not, as it may well be supposed, made less irritating by being delivered through the medium of the lips of the angry Ambassador, was the subject of a hot debate in the Privy Council; and the majority of its members, after long deliberation, in spite of the King's earnest wishes, refused to assent to the proposition. The expression of the popular will was even more decided. The national vanity had been highly flattered by the success of a deed as desperate as any since the days of Wallace, and the mob threatened an outbreak, if anything were done injurious to the idol of the hour.

Amid such difficulties James adopted a middle course. Buccleugh was ordered to Linlithgow to take his trial before the Privy Council.

Two weeks had elapsed since his arrival—two long, long weeks, (how carefully had Mary noted each hour as it passed,) and yet she had not seen him. He had sought neither her presence, nor that of Lady Beatrice. There was neglect in this. There was worse, there was positive avoidance. Lady Beatrice had sent to request his presence at the Palace. He had in language polite, but decided, refused the invitation. Euphame confident in her age, and her gratitude, proceeded to Wullie Trummell's, to express to the Lord Warden, personally, her thanks for her grandson's deliverance. Apparently, she had been expected; for the Baillie, in person, and the henchman of the young noble informed her that the Warden declined to receive her, and she had nothing for it, but to return to the Palace, and communicate to her nurseling her unsuccessful visit.

The act was too distinct in itself, not to have a purport, and Mary read it well.

“I was wrong,” muttered she to herself. “He has done a generous act, but it was for the mere pleasure of acting generously, and for no love of me. He has never forgotten the braes of Yarrow.”

And Mary’s imagination transplanted her to the banks of the crystal stream. Once more rose up before her mental vision, the actors and the scene, bridge and bower, torrent and wood, the young noble, and his lady-love, the words of entreaty, and their rejection—the insulting rejection. Then, too, came the memory of his parting words. How well they were remembered!—each syllable as it was uttered—the look—the gesture—the tone.

“Yes,” said Mary to herself, “he made a vow never to ask my hand again; and he will keep it—else he were forsworn knight—dishonoured noble! Well, I do not blame him. I cannot blame him. I have myself raised the bar between us; and as I have sown, I must reap. But it is idle to dream of such things

now. I will think of him no more." And, as a natural sequence to such a young lady's resolution, poor Mary thought of nothing else.

Such reflections, recurring as they did each day, each hour, each minute, were little calculated to promote health or happiness. The young girl's cheek became paler, and her step less firm. At length, on the plea of indisposition, she sought from the Queen permission to absent herself from the duties of her office, and declined the society even of her old nurse, or Beatrice ; and when, in spite of her entreaties, both, at intervals, sought her chamber, it was to find her by turns irritable, or moodily silent.

The kind-hearted sister of Lord Gowrie, was not to be deterred from the friendly duties, by the ungracious manner in which they were received ; and, in spite of Mary's petulance, she continued her visits. Nor were these limited to the hour of day. Occasionally, during the night, with the noiseless step of affection, would she make her way to Mary's sleeping-room, and gently opening the door, would listen, with anxious ears, for the deep

and measured breathing that announced the invalid's repose.

On one occasion, however, on entering the chamber as usual, with her accustomed gentle step, she was astonished to find lights burning within. On a chair by the side of the table, sat Mary, but asleep. She had evidently been in bed, for its drapery was disordered; and now, arrayed in her dressing-gown, and sunk in the cushions of an easy chair, she slept that deep slumber which is often the result of exhaustion.

She had been writing, for her fingers still held the pen. On the table before her, was the repository of her jewellery—an ivory, silver-bound casket—and beside it, two papers apparently but just withdrawn from its custody. Beatrice bent over the sleeper's shoulder, and with eager eyes, endeavoured to learn their purport. One was headed, 'MY WILL.' Its clauses were rapidly scanned, and the fair intruder turned hastily to the other. It was the Royal Warrant for Mary's marriage, obtained by the Italian from James, and bearing

the signature of Bowes and the Royal Consorts. It may be recollected, that it had been presented to the young girl by the Lord Warden, and was complete in itself, except that a blank had been left for the name of the future bridegroom.

Over this document too, the eyes of Lady Beatrice wandered rapidly. All at once, her cheek flushed, and a faint smile played about her lip. A second time she read, as if to assure herself of the contents, and then with a step as noiseless as when she had entered, she left the unconscious slumberer to her repose, and sought her own chamber.

“God help me,” she said to herself. “So this is her secret. Well, I will not betray it, unless life require the betrayal. For the present, it will be sufficient to inform the Queen, that the girl is ill—is dying, and to add my suspicions as to the cause. What my Royal Mistress may attempt or achieve, I know not; but I know this, that if that marriage be not made, and soon, poor Mary’s garment of white will not be a bridal dress, but a winding-sheet.”

CHAPTER XVI.

THE PRIVILEGES OF LEAP-YEAR.

IN accordance with this resolution, Lady Beatrice, on the following morning, sought the Queen's chamber, and called her attention to the drooping strength and paling cheek of Mary Ker. Of her further discoveries, however, she said nothing. Neither the Will nor the Warrant was mentioned. But not the less distinctly, and as though the idea were merely the result of her own suspicions, did she impress upon her Mistress, her conviction that the ill health of the invalid was to be attributed to a secret and hopeless passion for the Lord Warden.

Anne listened with interest. Susceptible herself, she was ever ready to lend her sympa-

thy in affairs of the heart. Unhappily, in a case such as the present, mere sympathy was valueless, unless it was attended with results. But a few months would probably see the grave close over her young attendant; and yet, how to produce the only *dénouement* likely to avert a fate so sad, and yet so certain, perplexed the Queen and her fair counsellor.

“I will send for the Signor Octavio,” said Anne, at length. “He is the only one who is able to unravel this tangled skein. A true magician, he is ever successful; and what can the best magic give more than success?”

Accordingly, the Italian was summoned to the Queen’s chamber.

It was no uncommon event. He was, in fact, a daily visitant at the Palace.

To the King, independently of his Majesty’s private hopes of being able to obtain from his wealthy guest, an additional bracelet or gold chain, the society of the Ambassador of the Cardinal Grand Duke of Tuscany, was ever welcome. His master had been a member of the Sacred College; his influence with the

Pope was still great ; and James, anxious to conciliate any Power which might interfere with his English succession, sought on all occasions to impress on the Florentine Envoy, his horror of Calvinism and Calvinistic Divines, and his desire to shew tolerance, (and it was hinted, perhaps more than tolerance), to the Popish subjects of his present and future kingdom.

To the Queen, the presence of the Signor Octavio was not less agreeable. He had seen the lover ;—if all stories were true, the husband of her youth. What so delightful, as to speak of his person, his manners, his bearing. What so amusing to the giddy and thoughtless Anne of Denmark, as to contrast him with her slovenly sottish husband.

Then there were fashions to discuss ; and who better able than the Italian to dilate upon the most becoming height and shape for the ruff ; or the largest permitted size of the farthingale. Who could canvass more learnedly the difficult question, if a Queen should be contented with one crown on her head, or wear half a dozen ; or whether her jewels should be

confined to her ear, or be scattered thick as powder over her ringlets. Then there was gossip about Popes and Cardinals; and worst of all, scandals about Queen Elizabeth; and stories of Lettice Knolly's three husbands, and the double nuptials of Lady Rich; and a thousand other little bits of intelligence, of noble foreign dames, with whom or whose private history, Anne's Queen-like memory, and interminable German connections, made her acquainted.

In a word, the Italian was the *enfant chéri* of the palace, and from the chamber of dais, to the guard-house at the gate, every one smiled on him as he passed. His ideal powers as a sorcerer gave him some influence; his large expenditure, and the fame of his gold chains still more.

It was, therefore, with the manner of one who was familiar with the place, and was conscious of his welcome, that he entered the Royal chamber.

Anne received him with a smile, "*S'accomodi, Signor Ottavio.* Be seated, I pray you. And now," continued she, as he obeyed her

commands. "Magician as you are, tell me wherefore I have sent for you?"

"The question, Madam, is somewhat of a general one. Is the matter of importance?"

"Immense."

"You would ask me whether the fair Gabrielle be as handsome as she is represented."

"No."

"Whether the new great discovery of our century—the putting yellow starch into the ruff, be an improvement or not."

"Wrong again."

"If ladies shoes should have heels more than three inches high?"

"Out, once more."

"Or, whether a fan looks best of silk, or of peacock's feathers."

"Pooh! pooh! Far from it as ever."

"Nay, then, I give it up. I have mentioned all the most interesting incidents of the time, and am at the end of my inventory."

"I begin to suspect, Sir Italian, that after all you are but a poor sorcerer. You have not discussed all the most important questions of

the time. There is one which is interesting now, and ever—the most important of any, and you have left it unmentioned.”

“And what is that?”

“You have spoken of women’s beauty and their dress. Is there nothing worth note in them beyond this?”

“I leave it to your Majesty to instruct me.”

“Their feelings, Signor Octavio ;—their affections.”

“Ah ! I had forgotten.”

“You did wrong, Sir Venetian. The feelings and affections of our sex are worthy of a place in your catalogue of notabilities, and it is precisely with regard to them, that I would consult you now.”

“Madam, I listen.”

“If a woman be desperately in love with a man, who continues indifferent to her, what does she do?”

“That is a question which requires no reflection. If a woman cannot win one lover, she takes another.”

“No, sirrah ; she dies.”

“ Oh ! per Bacco !” said the Italian as he flung himself back in his chair, with a shrug of the shoulders, and an expansion of the hands, which, in spite of himself, marked the excess of his astonishment.

“ What Signor—do you doubt the matter ? Have you forgotten the fate of Dido ?”

“ That, Madam, is a story of ancient history, and it is suspected that the stories of ancient history are fables. Where, at the present day, can you find such results from such a cause ?”

“ It is precisely because at the present day there is such an example, that I sent for you. To you, who know so much, it is unnecessary to affect concealments. Mary Ker is dying.”

“ One of your Majesty’s maidens ;—she whose wardship I obtained from the King ?”

“ The same. She is dying I tell you.”

“ What is her disease ?”

“ That which killed the Queen of Carthage—unrequited affection.”

“ For whom ?”

“ Do *you* ask ? For the Lord Warden.”

The Italian smiled.

"It is, then, as I told you?"

"Yes. It is as you told me. But how could you suspect it? for she had refused him twice."

"Ah, that was long ago."

"Scarce four weeks by-gone."

"An age, nevertheless, in Cupid's calendar."

"Well, be the time long or short, it matters not. Mary has changed her mind; and now, even you, Signor Octavio, shall confess, with good reason. So again listen and answer me. What makes a woman in love with a man?"

"That, Madam, is a point on which I can speak with authority; for I once inspired a *grande passion* myself."

"Where?"

"At Rome."

"How?"

"By wearing in my hat a blue feather, two feet long."

"A slander," said Anne, "a gross slander. To suppose that a woman's heart could be won by a blue feather!"

“It fascinated my Madonna, at least. I call all the Gods to witness—I invoke Styx itself, as the evidence of the fact. But I deny not, that there may be other influences equally powerful. I have heard of great results produced by yellow stockings, more especially when cross-gartered.”

“Pshaw! away with such trifling. Know, Signor, that our sex ever admire in men, not their dress, but their actions. And thus, they who have conquered kingdoms and armies, are precisely those who are best able to conquer ladies’ hearts.”

“Such things might have been in old Rome, perhaps; but I dreamed that the fashion had passed away.”

“No, Sir; such feelings exist still in many women; and, most of all, do they live in Mary Ker. Her study has been that of the lives of heroes of the past;—her objects of admiration and love, great actions like theirs.”

“And what has this to do with the Lord Warden?”

“Everything. She refused him, when she

thought him merely a Border Baron. She loves him since he has done a deed, which, even the heroes that she admires so much, might be proud of."

"A very daughter of the old Republic."

"Yes. But what avails a Roman dame, without a Roman mate?—a Portia without a Brutus?—a Cornelia—" and the Queen hesitated, and coloured, and stopped suddenly.

"A Cornelia, your Majesty would say—who has no chance of being the mother of the Gracchi."

"Even so. But to be serious. This girl's life hangs upon a thread. I love her, and would fain do her service."

"And so would I; for she is the foster-sister of that young scape-grace who carried me off so gallantly from Scrope's bloodhounds. In what can I be of service to her, and to your Majesty?"

"In one word then—does Buccleugh love this girl? and if he love her, will he ask her hand again?"

"In one word, I believe that he does love

her ; although his pride has received so rude a shock, that until that pride be soothed, the love is torpid, though it be not dead. As to your second question ; he has taken a vow never to ask her again ; and he will keep it."

" Alas ! alas ! then there is no hope."

" None, unless—"

" Unless what ?"

" Unless she ask him."

" Impossible."

" Why impossible ? It is done every day."

" What ! a woman ask a man to marry her ?"

" Yes."

" Oh, *parbleu !*" said Anne of Denmark, with an indignant wave of the hand.

" I offend your Majesty, and am silent."

" Nay, speak—say what you will. I will forgive you, if every second word were a treason."

" I repeat then, why should she not ask him ? What else are women doing half their lives ? Do you not dance at us—dress at us—follow us—torment us ? At joust and tournament, at

court and at camp, with hound or with hawk, at wapenshaw or when the archers try their arrows at the butts, is not your sex ever there? dressed in their gala attire, smiling at us, glancing at us? and all for what? Why but to make love to us. Madam, do you deny this?"

"I deny it not. I admit the love-making. But to say that we propose to the men—that is scandalous."

"Nay, Madam, if you admit the love-making and deny the proposal, permit me to observe that the scandal is with your majesty, and not with me. For the proposal means matrimony; and love without matrimony is not orthodox."

"I believe you are right," said the Queen, with a laugh, "right in fact; but your analysis of female actions does not advance poor Mary's marriage. She may look as if she loved him. She could not help looking it if she tried; but as to her saying to him, 'Lord Warden, will you marry me?' that is an impossibility. And here comes Lady Beatrice," continued the Queen, as the sister of Lord Gowrie entered the room. "You are arrived, girl, in a happy hour; for I

have need of you to stand up for the dignity of your sex."

"And in what," said the new-comer, "is it in peril?"

"I have been speaking to our friend the Signor Octavio, of poor Mary's new-born phantasy."

"And what comfort does he bring us?"

"None. He says that the Lord Warden will hold by his vow; and that though he may still love Mary, he will die and make no sign."

"There is no hope then?"

"None, or next to none; for the only chance of the marriage is an impossibility."

"And what is that?"

"That Mary should ask him herself."

"It cannot be," said Lady Beatrice, warmly. "All female pride—all maiden dignity is opposed to it."

"It may be so," said the Italian; "perhaps it should be so; but the excellence of the doctrine will not aid us in our difficulty. Buccleugh has a bitter recollection of the past; and of this I am certain—that, unless there be some prof-

ferred evidence, either from the young lady's own lips, or under her hand-writing, that she will accept him as her husband, the fair Mistress Ker will live and die one of the Queen's maidens."

There was a pause for a minute; and each gave themselves up to their own thoughts. Suddenly, Lady Beatrice gave a slight scream, and clapped her hands, as if under the influence of a joyous impulse.

"Repeat your words, Signor Octavio," said she.

The Italian obeyed.

"And you believe," continued Lady Beatrice, in an excited tone, "that if Mary did give one or other such proof of her affection, the Lord Warden might forget his pride?"

"I believe it: but I will not assure you of it."

"It is well. Madam," continued her attendant, addressing herself to the Queen, "will you lend me your ear?" And she drew Anne of Denmark aside.

For some minutes both engaged eagerly in

conversation. What the object of it was, did not transpire. But it appeared to have been satisfactory ; for, with a smile, the Queen approached the table in the centre of the room, and, seating herself, wrote a short note.

“ Give that, Signor Octavio,” said she, at length, “ to the Lord Warden. It is to command his presence here to-morrow at mid-day. Deliver it to him personally, but say not a word of the subject of our present interview, and so, for the moment, adieu.”

As she spoke, she presented her hand. The Italian sank upon one knee, and having respectfully pressed it to his lips, departed on his mission.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE KING'S WARRANT.

ON the following morning, at an hour before mid-day, Mary received a summons to attend the Queen. The message excited something like surprise.

During the preceding week, she had obtained permission to absent herself from her duties, on the plea of bad health, and as from hour to hour her strength failed her, and her spirits became more depressed, she clung with increasing fondness to her own chamber.

The orders of her Mistress, however, dispelled her solitary dreams, for Anne, though kind, was despotic; and while she bestowed much affection, exacted much obedience.

Mary had, therefore, nothing for it, but to comply. Robe de chambre and velvet slippers were accordingly abandoned — her unwilling toilet made—and having donned the gay dress, which the etiquette of her office required, she turned, ere she quitted the room, to survey herself in the Venetian mirror, which decorated its extremity.

The glance was not gratifying. A looking-glass is a friend that tells no flatteries. On its faithful surface were reproduced the pale and sunken cheek, the dim eye, the careless ringlets.

Mary was little vain—as little so, indeed, as human being could well be; but she was a woman, and in spite of herself, she sighed.

“Thank Heaven,” muttered she, “he will not be there. If, by chance, any of his past feelings still lingered, these bloodless cheeks, and lack lustre eyes of mine, would be sufficient to extinguish them. But I thought I had done with such vanities,” muttered she to herself petulantly. “It is folly, and worse than folly to indulge them. I will forget.”

And with a sob, which contradicted the words, poor Mary made her way to the Queen's apartment.

Anne of Denmark was not alone. By her side was Lady Beatrice, and there also, to Mary's astonishment, was Euphame. They had apparently been called together on some matter of great moment, for both were dressed with more than usual care, and Euphame in addition to her silken rokelay, had embellished the band of her widow's gown, with an immense gold buckle;—an important piece of decoration in the house of Kinmont; and never worn by its female members, except on occasions of more than ordinary solemnity.

As all this magnificence flashed upon Mary's eye, a feeling of terror came over her; a sort of consciousness, in short, that she had been summoned for some especial purpose; and the presence of her nurse, so rarely admitted to the Royal chamber, whispered to her heart that that purpose was connected with her foster-brother, and, of course, with the Lord Warden. If she had entertained any doubts upon the subject,

the Queen's first words were calculated to dispel them.

"Mary," said her Royal Mistress, "you are aware that Buccleugh has returned to Linlithgow. I expect him here at mid-day. Since he was last at Court, he has undergone great peril, and, moreover, has, I fear, given offence to my husband. It was in compliance with your wishes, and those of Lady Kinmont, that he has incurred his present disfavour, and I think it just, that, as some compensation, he should receive the thanks of both. It was to enable you to express these thanks that I have summoned you now."

Mary became deadly pale.

"I am grateful, Madam," said she, in a faint tone, "most grateful for the service the Lord Warden has rendered me; but I am ill, too ill at present to see a stranger. I pray, therefore, your Highness' permission to retire to my chamber, and Euphame there will tell him better than I can, how deeply she and I have felt his kindness."

"It is impossible, Mary. You must remain

here. I appeal to your nurse if, upon an occasion such as this, the gratitude should not be expressed by your own lips."

"Not a doubt of it, your Highness," broke in the impatient old woman. "It would be a blot for ever on the house of Cessford, if a daughter of their blood held so lightly the life of a foster-brother, as to deem it not worth her thanks. It is she, and not I, that must render them to Buccleugh."

"You are right," said the Queen. "Mary shall speak them herself; for she is the principal person of the drama. But that our mimic monarch should represent us with dignity, it were well, methinks that she were attired more royally. Where are the ear-rings I gave you, girl? Where the carcanet of rubies?"

"In the ivory coffer, Madam."

"Both suit you well, and I would have you wear them now. So Beatrice, as our friend is but feeble, hence to her chamber, and bring them. We ourselves, will act as her tiring woman."

"But the coffer is locked, Madam; I held the carcanet of value."

“Right, girl. The precaution was a thoughtful and a proper one. But I see the chatelaine hanging at your girdle. Give it to Beatrice.”

Mary coloured deeply, and unconsciously, perhaps, clasped the keys as if she feared entrusting them to another.

“I will myself, Madam,” said she, “go fetch the carcanet.”

Anne’s eye flashed fire.

“What folly is this?” said she in a haughty tone. “Is the Queen of Scots to be dictated to by one of her hand-maidens? Give Beatrice the keys I say, and at once.”

Mary tremblingly obeyed, and the sister of Lord Gowrie left the room. In a few minutes she returned. As she entered, Anne of Denmark fixed her keen eyes on her.

“Well Beatrice,” said she, in a meaning tone, “have you brought what I sent you for?”

“Madam, I have.”

“Then give me the jewels. And now, *mamie*,” said she, addressing Mary, as she received them, “kneel here by my side, and I will braid you. I would not, upon an occasion such as

this, that one of our maidens should appear otherwise than as becomes her and me. There, love," continued she, as she finished the task of adornment, and kissed the fair forehead by her knee, "get ye to your place, for here comes Bernard Lindsay, and, if I mistake not, our expected guest."

The Queen was right. It was the Lord Warden.

Buccleugh was dressed richly as usual. But the clothes were worn carelessly, and with the air of one who had, against his will, prepared himself for appearing in the royal presence. His step too was listless, his eye careworn, his cheek pale ; as if anxiety and exhaustion had done their work. With his habitual grace, however, he advanced and paid his respects to the Queen, replied to the nod of Lady Beatrice with a faint smile, and then bowed to Mary and Euphame, in turn. The obeisances to the daughter of the Baron of Cessford and her nurse, were perhaps even more profound than that with which he had acknowledged the presence of royalty, but the manner

of the young noble was not the less distant, and cold and haughty. Its effect was felt; for Mary's cheek grew pale, and, for the instant, Euphame's lips compressed themselves with sudden anger. It was but for an instant, however. Her better nature whispered to her heart the obligations of the past, and her demeanour assumed once more its grave composed character.

The Queen noted the scene with curious eye, and cast a look of interrogation at Lady Beatrice. The glance was answered by a slight elevation of the shoulder, and a pout of the lip.

"The commencement is little encouraging," thought Anne to herself, "but I will not throw up the cards yet. I must win the game," and with a smile, she turned towards her visitor.

"Lord Warden," said she, "since we last met, your glories have been in every man's mouth. I fear his Majesty is but little satisfied with an act that may involve him in a dispute with a neighbouring kingdom. As for myself—I care not to conceal it—the Queen of Scots feels most grateful for the gallantry which has pre-

served from death, the foster-brother of one of her maidens. To you, therefore, we give our thanks; and in order that nothing might be wanting to your happiness, we have summoned Mistress Ker and Lady Kinmont, that you might also receive the gratitude of those who are most interested."

"I feel grateful for your kindness, madam, but it was unnecessary, and undeserved. I am the Keeper of the West Marches. One within my jurisdiction was unjustly seized by the English Warden, and I have reclaimed him."

"I deny not, Sir Walter," said the Queen with a smile, "your attention to the duties of your office, and yet I may be permitted to assume that your anxiety to please a fair lady, did not diminish your desire to avenge the outrage upon Kinmont Willie."

"Madam," was the chilling reply, "as great Officer of the Crown, I had a duty to discharge; and I have discharged it."

Once more Anne glanced at Lady Beatrice, and again as before, the glance was met by a gesture expressive of annoyance.

“Come, Mary,” said the Queen, in a sharp impatient tone, as if the words of the Lord Warden had jarred unpleasantly on her ear. “Speak your thanks to the deliverer of your foster-brother. It may be that the Baron of Branksome may be more courteous to one of the Queen’s maidens than to their mistress.”

The courage of the invalid had, for some time, been rapidly deserting her. The doubts which she had entertained of the coldness of the Lord Warden, had, since his entrance to the Royal chamber, been converted into certainty; and the words of Anne of Denmark, intimating in others, as well as herself, a consciousness of the discourtesy, gave the finishing blow to her self-possession. She burst into tears.

Her despondency seemed to add to her mistress’s irritation.

“By my life,” said Anne, “Queen of Scots, as we are, our subjects give but scant attention to our wishes. Lord Warden and Mary Ker, have you both leagued to thwart us? And you, Lady Kinmont,” said she, turning suddenly to the old

woman, "are you as ill-nurtured as the rest? Will you not thank Buccleugh for what he has done for you?"

"Madam," said Euphame, "were it the last words I had to utter, it would be to thank the Baron of Branksome for his kindness; and if my young lady does it not, it is but because she feels that she can never sufficiently express what she and I owe him."

"Bravo! Lady Kinmont," said Anne. "You, at least, have spoken well. Is it not so, Lord Warden? Are you content?"

"Content, Madam, and more than content," was the reply, uttered in a tone of indifference. "My poor services have been but too amply repaid, and now, with your permission, I will withdraw."

"Not yet. You have still a duty to perform. Know you that the King has granted the marriage of his Ward, Mary Ker?"

There seemed fascination in the words, for Buccleugh, in spite of himself, arrested his retreating footsteps.

"Madam," said he, after a moment's pause,

“I am aware of the fact. I had the honour of placing the warrant in the hands of Mistress Ker herself.”

“It was that which was obtained by the Signor Octavio from the King?”

“It was, Madam.”

“And it was further attested by the signatures of ourself, and Sir Robert Bowes.”

“Your Majesty is correct.”

“But, if I recollect aright, a blank was left for the name of the future husband?”

“Again your Majesty is most accurate.”

“The warrant gave to the bearer the power of filling up that blank, and thereby securing the hand of Mistress Ker; and you, I am informed, to preserve the fair lady from an unwished-for mate, placed the paper in her own hands, in order that she might possess the power of preventing any name being introduced into the deed, except that of the man she loved.”

“Such was my object, Madam. You have described my intentions to the letter.”

“And a noble object, and generous intentions they were. It has been whispered, Sir

Walter, that in other times, the lady had looked coldly on your suit ; and to give her the power of selecting a more fortunate rival, was a proud deed of chivalry."

Buccleugh crimsoned with passion.

"Madam," said he, in tones which did not attempt to conceal his anger ; "the subject is a painful one ; and permit me to say, its introduction at the present moment is ill-timed and unnecessary. I will withdraw."

"Not yet. Nor is the introduction of the subject now, without its opportuneness or necessity. You are our Bayard ; you must show yourself chivalrous, even to the end. And it is for that purpose I have summoned you here. The blank you spoke of in the marriage contract, is a blank no longer. It has, I have now to inform you, been filled up with the name of Mistress Ker's future husband ; and I would have you witness the deed."

Buccleugh paled a little, and a slight tremor came over him. It was but for an instant, however ; for in a moment he recovered himself.

"If you desire it, Madam, I am ready ;

although I could have wished you had chosen another for the office. And yet, permit me to ask a question. I placed the Warrant in the hands of Mistress Ker, to prevent her being forced into a marriage she detested. Ere I sign, I must learn if the —” and the Lord Warden hesitated for a minute, and then continued, “if he, who is to be her husband, be agreeable to her.”

“She has herself selected him.”

“Do you assure me of that?” continued he, turning to Mary, whose troubled glance attested her astonishment.

“You have my assurance of it,” said the Queen, with a smile. “Is not that sufficient?”

“I doubt not your Majesty,” said Buccleugh; “but in a matter so important, and one, more especially, in which I am to play a part, you must pardon me if I seek an answer from Mistress Ker herself. Madam,” continued he, addressing Mary, “I am called on to witness your marriage contract; your—” once more there was hesitation, “your future husband—has he been selected voluntarily?”

There was no answer. For the last five minutes, Mary had been unable to comprehend the scene that had been passing before her ; and now, colouring at one moment, and deadly pale at another, she gazed at Buccleugh, as if her ear had failed to take in his words.

“ Lord Warden,” said the Queen, with a smile, “ your question is a proper and an honest one. Mistress Ker has not thought fit to reply to it. But if you cannot gather the answer from her lips, you may, at least, have it from her pen. Lady Beatrice,” continued she, turning to her attendant, “ give me the King’s Warrant for the marriage of Mistress Ker.”

In obedience to the mandate, the fair sister of Lord Gowrie produced from the bosom of her dress, the paper whose contents, on the preceding evening, she had perused over the shoulders of the sleeping invalid. Mary recognized, in a moment, the precious document.

“ Not that, Beatrice !” said she, with a scream, “ not that ! If you have any womanly feeling—if you have any maiden shame, you will not give that.” And she sprang eagerly

forward, to clutch the tell-tale writing from her fingers.

It was in vain. Lady Beatrice passed the Warrant to the Queen, and then with a strong retaining grasp, laid her hand upon Mary's wrist.

Anne of Denmark, affected not to observe the agitation of her attendant. She turned to the Lord Warden.

"This, Sir Walter," continued she, "is the Royal Warrant. You will learn from its contents, that no violence has been done to Mistress Ker's feelings. Her selection of the bridegroom is a voluntary one, and for proof of the fact, you will observe, that his name has been inserted in her own hand-writing. Take it," continued she, as she placed the document in his hands, "and tell us if you approve of the fair lady's choice. If I read his name aright, it is one Sir Walter Scott, of Branksome, Lord of Liddesdale, and Warden of the West Marches."

Buccleugh took mechanically the paper offered him, and then, as if unable to compre-

hend the words that met his ear, turned his eyes towards Mary.

The young girl made no sign. For awhile, indeed, after the Queen had obtained the Warrant, the varying colour of her face bore evidence of the internal struggle. At intervals, too, she shivered, and apparently had some difficulty in maintaining her upright position, for she rested one hand upon the table, and the other upon the back of a chair near her. By degrees, however, her energies revived, and with her eyes fixed upon the floor, and her neck slightly bent, she calmly awaited the result.

Buccleugh, also in turn, had recovered his self-possession, and proceeded to read the Warrant. When he came to the part where the blank had been filled up by his own name, the colour rushed to his temples and cheek ; and it seemed as if he doubted his eyesight, or his powers of comprehension, for twice or thrice he passed his hand across his forehead, with the air of one who would have brushed away some mist that obscured his mental vision ; and then,

slowly, and word by word, as if to force upon himself the sense of what was before him, a second time, and from end to end, he read the Warrant.

In the mean time, not a whisper was heard in the room—not a sound; and the Queen, Lady Beatrice, and Euphame with blanched cheeks, and parted lips, and straining eyes, gazed at the young noble, as if they would have read the changing thoughts that flitted across his brow. As for Mary, she stood as before, pale as monumental alabaster, and silent, and motionless; except when a spasmodic movement of the fingers on the table, or the back of the chair, betrayed the passion working within.

At length, Buccleugh completed the second reading. For it might be a couple of minutes after the perusal, he fixed his eyes upon the ground, as if in thought; and then with a measured and formal step, he approached Mary.

“Mistress Ker,” said he, in a grave tone, and pointing to the blank which had been filled up with his name, “is this your hand writing? And was it written voluntarily?”

There was no answer.

“Mistress Ker,” said he a second time, “is this your hand writing? And was it written voluntarily?”

Still there was no reply, but more firmly than ever the fair fingers grasped the table and the chair.

The prolonged silence irritated Anne of Denmark.

“Are you deaf, girl?” said she. “Are you dumb? or do the usual petulance and waywardness of your nature select the present occasion to exhibit themselves, in order that you may show your disrespect to your mistress. Speak, I say.”

The words seemed to arouse Mary into consciousness, for she looked up. The cheek was pale as ever, but the glance of the eye was calm, as that of one who foresaw her fate, but was resolved to meet it with dignity.

“Lord Warden,” said she; “what you have now seen, was not intended during my life to be looked on by other eyes than mine. How they, who have abstracted my property without my

knowledge, can excuse or defend the act, I know not, and I care not. You have asked me a question. To some it might appear unmaidenly to reply to it ; but I hold, that when a man has twice risked his life for a woman, he is entitled to hear from her lips the truth. Truthfully, therefore, will I answer you. Sir Walter, the hand-writing is mine ; and what is written, was written voluntarily."

The words were spoken bravely ; there was no tremulousness in the tone, no quivering in the eye. The cheek was pale as ever, but the glance was steady, calm, unmoved.

It may be, that Buccleugh had not expected the frankness of the avowal. His look, at least, wore the character of astonishment. Insensibly, the expression of the face changed. It seemed as if in spite of conviction, and disbelief, and doubt, some new thought was forcing itself upon his brain. All at once, he started ; and then, flushed and breathless, bent hastily forward, and fixed his eager eyes on the fair creature before him.

For a moment, Mary's gaze met his frankly. It was but for a moment however. Suddenly, the eyelids quivered, and the blue orbs became troubled. Once, and again, they raised themselves, as if they would have re-asserted their power ; and then, borne down as it were by some irresistible influence, they hurriedly sought the ground ; while over neck, and brow, and cheek, rushed the impetuous blood.

The blush must have possessed a language of its own. At least, it seemed to be understood, for Buccleugh advanced towards her. Unchecked, and unresisted, he removed from chair and table, the trembling fingers — unchecked, and unresisted, he passed a supporting arm round the young girl's waist — unchecked too, and unresisted, he pressed his lips to hers in a long, dreamy kiss ; and then, as the fair head sank upon his shoulder, he turned to the Queen and said,

“Madam, I obey the orders of his Majesty, and yours. I *accept* this Ward of the Crown as my wife.”

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE STORY OF THE ITALIAN.

THE feud which for eighty years had separated the rival houses was terminated at last. Buccleugh was betrothed to Mary Ker. The Queen, who assumed to herself the honour of the approaching nuptials, determined to celebrate their advent, and the young noble was commanded to sup at the Palace. But that no curious eyes might note the impassioned admiration of the cavalier, or the blushes of his lady love, the early evening meal was served in the Queen's chamber; and beside the parties interested, Lady Beatrice was the only guest.

When the repast was over, the newly affianced

pair retired to the apartment which was considered the especial domain of the daughter of Lord Gowrie. On the present occasion, she had undertaken to play the part of duenna to her fair comrade. But whether it was that her memory was treacherous, and she had forgotten her duties, or that the instinct of a woman's nature suggested to her that her society was not absolutely essential to the happiness of her guests ; so it was, that for the larger portion of the evening, the lovers were left alone ; and it was only when the bells of St. Michael chimed midnight, that Buccleugh was warned of the necessity for his proceeding homeward.

He accordingly bent his steps to his own quarters. Late hours were not the fashion of the age, and he anticipated finding every one, except his personal domestics, retired to rest. What then, was his astonishment, on opening the door of his sitting room, to find lights burning. Corded packages lay upon the floor, and by the side of the fire, with boot on leg, and spur on heel, sat the Italian.

“ What means this, Signor Octavio,” said

his host, in accents of astonishment. "One might suppose you were preparing for a journey."

"They would suppose correctly then. Such is the fact."

"And, wherefore?"

"To your private ear I may tell it. I have learned, this afternoon, that there is some one coming here from the English Court, who knows the secret of my disguise, and its disclosure might be dangerous."

"Your disguise! Ha! it is as I suspected then. You are no pedlar?"

The Italian nodded.

"Fool that I was ever to deem you so. But to the matter in hand. You would leave this ere the unwelcome visitor arrived?"

Once more the Italian gave a sign of assent.

"And when go you, and where?"

"I have learnt that my old friend, Andrew Barton is in the Frith of Forth. He sails with the morning's tide from Leith for the Elbe, and it is my purpose to accompany him."

"And would you, after being the cause of so

much happiness, leave us without witnessing its completion, without telling us who he is to whom we are so much indebted?"

"*We* are indebted. It is as I suspected then. When a man pays a visit against his will, and prolongs it till after midnight, he must have found some unexpected source of happiness," and the Italian fixed his keen eyes upon his companion, in a manner that brought the blood to his cheeks.

"Yes, my friend!" said Buccleugh, as he recovered from his embarrassment. "It is as you suspect."

"And the Montagues and Capulets of the Border are no longer hostile houses."

"Even so. But think not now of us. Tell me of yourself. This journey of yours, is it necessary?"

"Absolutely. Life itself may be perilled by its delay."

"Nay then, I will say nothing, and do nothing to protract your stay; and yet, ere you go, will you not tell me who you are, and what you are? To leave us without a guess of your name, or

your whereabouts, is almost enough to make one credit that you are the sorcerer men call you."

"My name must remain untold, even, my friend, to you."

"But say, at least, something. Give me some hint as to the means by which you have produced results so extraordinary and unintelligible."

"To tell the means may imperil myself and others; but you have saved my life, and have a claim on my confidence. I will say something then; though that too, slight and valueless as you may hold it, has been entrusted to no ear but your own, and may be imparted to no one—ay," continued he, with a smile, "to neither friend nor bride."

Buckleugh gave the pledge expected of him; and the Signor Octavio spoke as follows:

"I am of a knightly family in Kent. For generations the members of my house have been devoted to the service of their country. They have furnished to England statesmen and ambassadors; and my brothers and myself were educated for a profession which had become,

in some degree a family inheritance. For this purpose, while yet a boy, I was sent to Oxford, and placed under the charge of one of the professors—a Venetian of the name of Alberico Gentile. The old man took a fancy to me. I was ever fond of languages ; and under his zealous tuition, I not only learned Italian rapidly, but spoke it with that purity of intonation which can only be acquired in boyhood. At eighteen, I left the university, and, to complete my education, proceeded to the continent. France, Denmark, Germany, Italy, were visited in turn. All charmed me ; but most of all did my young sympathies cling to Venice, the birth-place of my Oxford preceptor. I spent there nearly five years ; and through the medium of the letters with which my aged friend had furnished me, made the acquaintance of the most distinguished men within its bounds. But time passed on. After eight years absence, I returned to England. It might be that a residence beyond the Alps invests a man with the character of a Machiavel. Howe’er it was, it was bruited abroad in my own country, that I was wise beyond my years.

The report reached my Lord of Essex. He needed a counsellor. He offered me the post of his secretary, and I accepted it."

"By my troth, friend Octavio," said Buclidean, laughing, "if present tales be true, the honour was not without its peril."

"You are right, and what I am now about to tell you is one of those matters for the sake of which I have bound you to secrecy. The peril was indeed great. Scarcely had I commenced my duties, when I learned that Essex aspired to the crown, and that many of the most powerful Barons in England lent him their support."

"And what did you?"

"Told my master frankly that I neither believed in his rights, nor shared his hopes."

"Plain speaking, i'faith, but scarcely in character with a Machiavel. And what did the Lord Robert?"

"Instead of sending me, as I expected, to a dungeon, he admitted my excuses, and gave me my dismissal. Nay more, on learning that I was bent upon returning to the continent, he entrusted me, (such was his confidence,) with

some of those letters, which had been addressed to him by the great nobles I spoke of, and which pledged them to his cause. They were too dangerous to keep by him. They were too valuable to be destroyed."

"And whither went you?"

"I returned to Italy, and to Venice. Amongst those with whom I had there been most intimate, was a Signor of the name of Vietta. He had often proffered me the aid of his patronage, and I now determined to accept it."

"Well, you found your friend."

"Yes, but not at Venice. He had become Secretary to the grand Duke of Tuscany."

"And you followed him to his new home?"

"I did so, and the hour of my arrival was auspicious. The Prince of the Medicis had been attached to Mary Stuart, and still took an interest in her son. He had learnt of plots that threatened the life of the King of Scots, and determined to warn him of them. By Vietta's influence, I was selected as his Ambassador. But as after my connexion with Essex,

I held it dangerous to appear as an Englishman, or to touch on English ground, I assumed an Italian name, made my way to Hamburgh, and there, through the influence of Peter Munch, the High Admiral of Denmark, to whom I had letters of credence, secured a vessel, and embarked for Scotland."

"Ha! now I can trace your footsteps. You were forced by a storm on the coast of Durham, and on your route northwards, as I learn from my friend Kinmont Willie, (for since his liberation we have become gossips,) made the acquaintance of the moss-trooper, of Lord Scrope, and of Bowes."

"You should add your own."

"True, an eventful journey! But Willie tells me you frightened Bowes on the road. Did you recognise him?"

"At once. I had seen him often when a boy. Fortunately a beard of ten years growth prevented the recognition being mutual."

"Well! you remembered his outward man. But that could have told you little."

"On the contrary, it told me every thing.

I had just heard of Essex's arrest. I knew of Bowes's complicity in his plots. I found the wealthy and state-loving ambassador, dressed like a lacquey, at a distance from his post, and in the neighbourhood of his own mansion."

"And you guessed that so disguised, a journey, could have but one object."

"Precisely! I spoke as if I knew it, and the confusion of Sir Robert, satisfied me that I was right."

"So much for the road. Now for the Court. Explain your doings here."

"They scarce need explanation. You had saved my life, I wished to repay my debt, and was not long in discovering the means. You were in love."

"How learned you that?"

"I must have been a mole, had I not seen it. Your lady was about to be wedded to another, and I interfered, and won her back for you."

"True, but how? The King—"

"I had gold chains enough in my casket, to have purchased his consent to the marriage of every maiden in his realm."

“But the Queen—she is made of less plastic materials. How won you her?”

“That is a lady’s secret, and must remain so. Suffice it that her consent was won.”

“And Bowes?”

“He was one of the nobles who had given in their adhesion to Essex, and I had furnished myself with copies of some half dozen of their letters, in order that if I fell into Cecil’s hands, I might interest them in my favour, by making their own safety depend on my escape.”

“And the epistle of the Knight of Streatlam was among the number?”

The Signor Octavio nodded.

“And you threatened, and he yielded?”

Once more there was a sign of assent.

“But how found you access to James? How did you elude my search on the night of the Masque?”

“The means were simple enough. Some ten years since, I had a brother connected with a mission to Scotland. He required a spy, and his gold stole the heart of Bernard Lindsay. I terrified the old man with my knowledge of his

secret ; and his fears, and it may be, some additional ducats, won him to my will."

"And by his aid you escaped me?"

"Yes. Your scouts sought me zealously, but they should have looked within the palace as well as without it."

"*Within* the palace ! Ha ! now I comprehend. From you then came the mysterious letter that bade Mistress Ker to hope."

"I did. I was in her neighbourhood, and I could not resist playing the good Samaritan to a young lady's sorrows."

"Verily a perfect net-work of contrivances. I scarce even now comprehend the process of their weaving ; but I can, at least, judge of the result, and to me what result happier or better?"

"You think so ? It is natural."

"Think so !" said the Warden with something like astonishment, "certainly, and do not you?"

"Will you forgive me, if I say 'no?' The man who tore Kinmont Willie from the clutches of Lord Scrope, was born to a great destiny ;

but love is no friend to ambition, and I doubt its being fulfilled."

"You doubt justly then. The ambition may exist and does exist, but I have not the right to indulge it, for its gratification would be inconsistent with interests paramount to my own. Heaven has made me the head of a great name. To me kinsmen, and clansmen, and dependants, look up for counsel, and aid, and sympathy, and protection; and they shall not look in vain. Like the Patriarchs of old, I will dwell among mine own people."

The Signor sighed.

"Nay," said his companion, with a smile, "let not my inglorious ease bring a shade upon your brow, nor will we speak of these things. Let us speak of another's career—of one that must be brilliant—of your own."

"I have none now. Essex's arrest has swept it to the winds. I must begin life again. Once more, as Will of the Globe hath it. 'The world's mine oyster.'"

"Which you with sword will open?"

"Nay. If I am fated to pluck the pearl

from its shell, it will be by more peaceful means."

"You have still projects, then?"

"No; merely wishes."

"And may I learn them?"

"Why not?—what greater happiness than to breathe into a friendly ear one's aspirations? I have been much beyond the Mountains. I love the sunny south; and could I shape out my own fortunes, would wish to live there still;—no longer, however, as heretofore, an unknown and unrecognized individual; but as the representative of the counsels, the might, the majesty of England."

"How!—you an Ambassador?"

"Why not? Do you deem me unequal to the office?"

"No; but I hold you beyond it. What! with a thousand excellences of face, and figure, and manners, and language—excellences which must assure to you the most distinguished success in social life—would you bury yourself in some lone, dust-covered chamber, with paper and pen, wasting the midnight oil—the slave

of the lamp. What a contrast to the magician who thrilled us on the night of the Queen's Masque."

"A magician, nevertheless, still. Ay, and one more potent than before; for where is the sorcerer so great as a great King's representative? The paper you spoke of, is his *Ephemeris*; the pen between his fingers, his Magic Wand. With a few scratches of its point, have been changed, dynasties; and shaken, empires. Is there, from the days of the Rabbins, down to those of the disciples of the Rosy Cross, one of the mystic brotherhood that has wielded a mightier power?"

"And yet even that power must fade. On you, as on others, Time will lay his paralysing fingers; and when the head that plans, and the hand that executes, have alike forgot their cunning, what will remain to you, after a youth overteeming with excitement, but the fretful inactivity of age?"

"No; it's repose. For to the aged, inactivity is not merely a necessity, but a blessing."

"And could you, after having played a great

part on the world's stage, be content to look on—the passive spectator of another's acting?"

"Perhaps not; nor is it necessary. There are quiet nooks on earth, in which one is permitted to forget the struggle of the elements overhead; and some such shall be my home."

"A second Gelimer in a cottage."

"Have it so, if you will; and yet I had pictured for myself a more dignified retreat than that of the Vandal King. A cottage charms me not. I have lived much in the past, and love its associations. No. My home shall be some monastic pile, whose sculptured imagery recalls the religion of its first founders. A feudal stronghold may look down on it from a neighbouring hill. Trees, old as the ivy-covered walls they shelter, shall surround it; and a placid river murmur gently beneath their shade."

"And there you would linger out existence, unloved—untended—alone."

"Not so; I would summon round me old friends, and old books, and old wine; and in the companionship of the great, and wise, of the

present and the past, and with the aid of those golden drops that lend even to such companionship a double charm, I would let what remains to me of life slip by. Such is the scene which my imagination has a thousand times conjured up to me as my last resting place ; and in such a scene, when youth's fitful fever's over, will I live—will I die."

" You dream."

" I prophecy."

" And what is a prophecy, but a dream ?"

" To most, no more ; yet to some, the no uncertain herald of the future, for the prophecy of the strong will, ever shadows forth its fulfilment."

" And such a will is yours ?"

" Is it but now you guess it ? Yes ; such a will is mine. But I hear our host's voice in the anti-chamber. He comes to announce the horses, and I must be gone. So farewell ; and yet, but for a season. There is something tells me, we shall meet again."

He rose, as he spoke. The two friends embraced, and the Italian departed.

His prediction was destined to be fulfilled. Some ten years after, Buccleugh chanced to be in London. He had been ennobled, and the necessity for returning thanks, compelled a visit to the British Solomon and the new Court, at Whitehall. He found there, Octavio Baldi. But the pedlar of Venice had changed his name, and cast his slough. The poet and the philosopher, the linguist and the swordsman; the wily diplomatist, the accomplished gentleman, the model on which statesman and gallant alike formed themselves, was the Lord Warden's old ally in the days of his courtship—SIR HENRY WOTTON.

My tale has found its close. Of the after-fortunes of those who figure prominently in its pages, what avails it to say anything. Have they not already been chronicled by history? And Buccleugh and Mary Ker? History tells also of them, and of their nuptials. Two centuries and a half have elapsed since the Warden of the West Marches wedded the Flower of Cheviot, but their children still rule gently over the glens they loved so well: and if

evil days come, and there are sounds on earth and in air that whisper of their approach, there is no gathering cry, to which the trusty Borderers will respond more readily, than that which stirred the hearts of their fathers of old—
“ Ride for Branksome.”

APPENDIX.

APPENDIX.

I HAVE had the presumption to attempt to reproduce upon the canvas, one of those historical personages whom Scott has made his own. The only excuse I can offer for an act so extravagant, is the opinion which I have long entertained, that the wealthy Monarch obeyed by his nobles, and toadied by his bishops, whom Sir Walter represents at Whitehall, had little in common (in external circumstances, at least, and external circumstances go far to make the man) with the pauper Chief of a rude people, whom his great Barons defied with impunity, and who was denounced weekly from the pulpit, in terms of the coarsest invective, by his Calvinistic clergy.

It occurred to me too, as a probable matter, that James's language and manners would be more "Doric," in earlier than in later life, and that even that very slender attention to etiquette which was forced on him by the lingering severities of the Tudor régime, was an amount of conventional decorum likely to be altogether disregarded in his northern home ; amid the old familiar faces with which he had been intimate from childhood.

Such were the differences—the changes produced by age and fortune ; impulses less controlled ; and weaknesses verging more closely on caricature—which appeared to me to separate the King of Scots from the King of England. With such differences I have endeavoured to depict him, and if I have not succeeded, I am disposed to attribute my failure less to any want of justice in the conception of the portrait, than to feebleness in its execution. Lest, however, my sketches should appear exaggerated or incorrect, I subjoin below some historical notices.

JAMES I.

HIS POVERTY AND BEGGING PROPENSITIES.

OF James's penury and his efforts to relieve it, Miss Strickland speaks thus :—

“ While the queen was reposing after her fatigues, her king was bestirring himself to raise funds for the expenses which his marriage rendered unavoidable. He was afflicted by all the tribulations common to those, who wish to make a splendid appearance with very slender means, or rather, without any means whatsoever. Very piteous were the missives he sent forth to his nobles, requiring benevolences to meet the expenses of his queen's coronation, and the celebration of his marriage festivities. Nothing came amiss—from those who had no ready cash, goods were thankfully accepted or borrowed. One family possesses an autograph letter from the king, dated Linlithgow Palace, in which he begs “the

loan of some silver spoons, to grace his marriage feast." In another letter, he craved the loan of a pair of silk stockings, from his dear Jonnie Slaites, (the earl of Marr,) for his own royal wearing, at a reception he gave the Spanish ambassador, adding, with a pathos peculiar to himself, "Ye wad na that your king suld appear a scrub, on sic an occasion."—*Miss Strickland*. Vol. VII. p. 338-9.

HIS BUFFOONERY IN LANGUAGE.

In the State Paper addressed by James to his subjects, announcing his departure for Norway, are the following words:—

"I kept it sa from the Chancellor . . . remembering that invidious and unjust burding he daily bears of *leading me by the nose* . . . as if I were an unreasonable creature, or a bairn that could do nothing of myself." "Thus far I speak for his part, as well as for my own honour's sake, that I be not unjustly slandered as *an irresolute asse*."—Quoted by *Lucy Aikin*. *James I.* Vol. I. p. 20—1.

If *bonhommie* or buffoonery, or whatever it may be termed, was so strongly implanted in James's nature, that it could not refrain from intruding itself, even on the usually dignified phraseology of an official document, how 'free and easy' must have been his tone and language, in the less guarded moments of social life.

HIS BUFFOONERY IN ACTION.

In "*Winwood's Memorials*" is an account of James's exploits when in his jovial moods. The passage is too coarse for extract, but it will be found in a note in "*Secret History of James I*, VOL. II. p. 349."

HIS SLOVENLINESS.

Sir Anthony Welldon knew James personally; and if his position at Court be correctly understood, had opportunities of knowing him well. Of his master's personal habits, he speaks thus:—

"Hee (James) never washt his hands, onely rubb'd his fingers ends slightly with the wet end of a napkin."

Of James' dress, Welldon speaks thus:—"In his dyet, apparrell, and journeyes, he was very constant; in his apparrell so constant, as by his good will, he would never change his cloathes untill worn out to very ragges."—*Secret History of James I*. Vol. II. pp. 2, 4, 5.

HIS INEBRIETY.

Of James' intemperance, Welldon speaks thus:—"He (James) drank very often, which was rather out of a custom than any delight, and his drinks were of that kind of strength, as Frontiniack, Canary.

high country wine, tent wine, and Scottish ale, that, had he not had a very strong brain, might have daily been overtaken, although he seldom drank at any one time, above four spoonfuls, many times not above one or two.”—*Secret History of James I.* Vol. II. p. 3.

The above shows James a tippler. The celebrated letter of Sir John Harrington, describing the orgies at Lord Salisbury’s, proves him a drunkard.

HIS ORATIONS. HIS CLERGY.

Of James’ extravagant passion for delivering orations, or, as the Scotch Chroniclers phrase it “Orysons,” frequent examples will be found in the “*Historie of James the Sext*,” (Bannatine Club) in “*Moyse*,” and also, if I remember aright, in “*Birrell*.”

In these three authors, and in “*Spottiswoode*,” are given ample details of the factious conduct, and insolent language of Walter Balcanquhal, and the other Scotch clergy, towards their sovereigns; as well as of their despotic interference, not only with the religion of their flocks, but with their civil privileges, and social pleasures.

HIS ADVANCES TO THE POPE.

In “*The staggering state of the Scots Statesmen*,” is an account of the celebrated private letter of James

to the Pope, in which, he offered to patronize Catholicism, on condition that the Holy See did not oppose his succession to the English crown. At an after period, the contents of the unpopular epistle oozed out, and James had the meanness to throw the odium of it on his secretary, James Elphinstone, who was ruined in consequence.—*Secret History of James I.* Vol. II. p. 357.

HIS RIVALRY WITH ESSEX.

An account of Essex's pretensions to the English crown, and the open avowal of them by his partisans, will be found in the masterly letter of the Earl of Northumberland to James. It is quoted by *Lucy Aikin*.—*James I.* Vol. I. pp. 56—7.

ANNE OF DENMARK.

HER PLOTTING.

For an account of the Queen's plot, see *Spottiswoode*, p. 411, and *Moyse*, p. 238.

The letter written on the occasion by James to Lord Mar, commencing with the remarkable words: "Because in the suretie of my son, consisteth my suretie," &c., betrays alike the greatness of the King's peril and of his fears.

For further details of Anne's passion for political

plotting—of her hatred to the Mars, the trustiest servants of her husband—of her attempt to gain possession of the person of Prince Henry, and the Castle of Stirling—of her mysterious intimacy with the Ruthvens, and after the failure of their conspiracy, her indecent sorrow for the dead, and scarce less indecent patronage of the living, Lady Beatrice, see also:—*Miss Strickland's Anne of Denmark*.

HER LOVE PASSAGES WITH STEPHEN BEALE.

We learn from "*Murdin's State Papers*," p. 637, that the young noble, was, prior to her marriage, an honoured, and trusted servant of Anne of Denmark.

For the popular scandals, which attributed to Beale, the paternity of Anne's second son, afterwards Charles I: see "*Peyton's Catastrophe of the House of Stuart*." The passage is too coarse for extract; but the curious will find it in *Secret History of James I.* Vol. II. p. 339.

In the novel, a more orthodox character has been given to the connexion, and to suppose such, was, under the circumstances, the legitimate privilege of the novelist.

HER SUPPOSED PORTRAIT BY BASSANO.

In the novel, Bassano is represented as alive in 1599. He died in 1592.

THE FEUD BETWEEN THE SCOTTS AND
THE KERS.

For an account of the long strife between the great Border families, see *Notes to Lay of Last Minstrel*.

For the duel between the two hot-headed young nobles, and the sad fate which successively befel their seconds, William Shaw, the King's architect, and Francis Mowbray, of Barnbogle.—See *Moyse*.

The Feudal war was brought to an auspicious termination, by the marriage of Sir Walter Scott to Mary Ker; and from their union, is descended the present Ducal family of Buccleugh. The fair lady's brother, too, Sir Robert Ker, was also the founder of a Ducal house. He obtained from James, the long-coveted Earldom of Roxburgh, and is ancestor of the Dukes of that name.

OCTAVIO BALDI.

The secret mission to the Scotch Court, of Sir Henry Wotton (afterwards Ambassador to Venice, and Provost of Eton), under the name and guise of Octavio Baldi, is narrated in *Walton's Biographies*.

There is a passage in Macaulay's *Machiavelli*, which remarks on the inscrutable expression of the portraits of the old Venetian and Florentine states-

men. It was this passage which suggested to me the giving to Wotton also, Englishman though he was, the Italian type. Nor does such incorrectly express the man. For Wotton was Italian, not merely by education, but in habits of mind; and his favourite, and frequently quoted adage of "*Volto sciolto, pensieri stretti*," shews that, in feeling, at least, he identified himself with the school of Machiavel.

"TAM O' THE COW-GATE."

For "Tam o' the Cow-gate," first Earl of Haddington; his passion for accumulation; and—that outward evidence of the inner man—the *nine-pockets*, in his small-clothes, see *Chambers's Traditions of Edinburgh*.

DAVID MOYSE.

Moyse wrote the memoirs of the Scottish portion of James's reign. He was a personal attendant of the King, and evidently a favourite, and an attached one; for he dedicates his work to his master, and subscribes himself, "Your Majesty's own old man." How much of affection is conveyed in these few words!

THE BLUE RING, ETC.

For an account of the *Blue Ring*, transmitted to James, by Lady Scrope, through the hands of her brother, Sir Robert Cary, as an intimation of the

death of Elizabeth ;—for Peter Munch, High Admiral of Denmark ; and how he had burned the dame whose witcheries troubled with storms his voyage ;—for Thomas Fowler, at once the attendant of the King of Scots, and the spy-correspondent of the Cecils ;—for the loves of the Laird of Logie, and Mistress Margaret Twinslace, the Danish waiting-woman ;—for Bowes, and his twenty years' Embassy to Scotland ;—for Lord Scrope, the English Warden ; and Sir John Carmichael, the Captain of the Guard of the King of Scots, see the cotemporary historians, and the *Murdin State Papers*.

KINMONT WILLIE.

In the Scotch Chroniclers, will be found an account of the adventurous career of Kinmont Willie ; and *inter alia*, his aiding Bothwell at Falkland, and his liberation from the dungeons of Lord Scrope, by the chivalrous gallantry of Buccleugh.

His Carlisle adventure has, also, been immortalized in a Border Ballad. The rhyming narrative has, probably, as just a claim to the title of a History, as its prose compeers ; but as some portions of it may be alleged to belong to romance, it is given at length below.

Such are some of the less-generally known anecdotes of the period, and such the traits that have been handed down to us of James and of his Queen. They are not flattering ; and yet in much I have adopted them. Two of the greatest of our modern biographers, have respectively represented William III as something more and less than man ; and I, like my fellows, have exercised the right of selecting for my portraits, those features and that colouring, which appear to me to convey the most distinct idea of the originals.

Of the truth or falsehood of the passages quoted or referred to, I offer no opinion. I neither impeach nor defend them. But I produce them in the hope that they may be considered by my readers, as sufficient warrant for the details of the story, and as evidence, that if in painting its principal personages, I have nothing extenuated, I have at least set down nought in malice.

THE AUTHOR.

KINMONT WILLIE.

O HAVE ye na heard o' the fause Sakelde ?
O have ye na heard o' the keen lord Scroop ?
How they hae ta'en bauld Kinmont Willie,
On Hairibee to hang him up ?

Had Willie had but twenty men,
But twenty men as stout as he,
Fause Sakelde had never the Kinmont ta'en,
Wi' eight score in his companie.

They band his legs beneath the steed,
They tied his hands behind his back ;
They guarded him, fivesome on each side,
And they brought him ower the Liddel-rack.

They led him thro' the Liddel-rack,
And also thro' the Carlisle sands ;
They brought him to Carlisle castell,
To be at my lord Scroope's commands.

“ My hands are tied, bnt my tongue is free !

And whae will dare this deed avow ?

Or answer by the border law ?

Or answer to the bauld Buccleugh !”

“ Now haud thy tongue, thou rank reiver !

There’s never a Scot shall set ye free :

Before ye cross my castle yate,

I trow ye shall take farewell o’ me.”

“ Fear na ye that, my lord,” quo’ Willie :

“ By the faith o’ my body, Lord Scroop,” he said,

“ I never yet lodged in a hostelrie,

But I paid my lawing before I gaed.”

Now word is gane to the bauld keeper.

In Branksome Ha’, where that he lay,

That lord Scroop has ta’en the Kinmont Willie,

Between the hours of night and day.

He has ta’en the table wi’ his hand,

He garr’d the red wine spring on hie—

“ Now Christ’s curse on my head,” he said,

“ But avenged of lord Scroop I’ll be !

“ O is my basnet a widow’s curch ?

Or my lance a wand of the willow tree ?

Or my arm a ladye’s lilye hand,

That an English lord should lightly me !

“ And have they ta’en him, Kinmont Willie,

Against the truce of border tide ?

And forgotten that the bauld Buccleugh

Is keeper on the Scottish side ?

“ And have they e’en ta’en him, Kinmont Willie,
 Withouten either dread or fear ?
And forgotten that the bauld Buccleugh
 Can back a steed, or shake a spear ?

“ Or were there war between the lands,
 As well I wot that there is none,
I would slight Carlisle castell high,
 Tho’ it were builded of marble stone.

“ I would set that castell in a low,
 And sloken it with English blood !
There’s nevir a man in Cumberland,
 Should ken where Carlisle castell stood.

“ But since nae war’s between the lands,
 And there is peace, and peace should be ;
I’ll neither harm English lad or lass,
 And yet the Kinmont freed shall be !”

He has call’d him forty marchmen bauld,
 I trow they were of his ain name,
Except sir Gilbert Elliot, call’d
 The laird of Stobs, I mean the same.

He has call’d him forty marchmen bauld,
 Were kinsmen to the bauld Buccleugh ;
With spur on heel, and splent on spauld,
 And gleuves of green, and feathers blue.

There were five and five before them a’,
 Wi’ hunting horns and bugles bright ;
And five and five came wi’ Buccleuch,
 Like warden’s men, arrayed for fight :

And five and five, like a mason gang,
That carried the ladders lang and hie ;
And five and five, like broken men ;
And so they reached the Woodhouslee.

And as we crossed the Bateable Land,
When to the English side we held,
The first o' men that we met wi'
Whae sould it be but fause Sakelde ?

“ Where be ye gaun, ye hunters keen ?”
Quo' fause Sakelde ; “ come tell to me !”
“ We go to hunt an English stag,
Has trespassed on the Scots countrie.”

“ Where be ye gaun, ye marshal men ?”
Quo' fause Sakelde ; “ come tell me true !”
“ We go to catch a rank reiver,
Has broken faith wi' the bauld Buccleuch.”

“ Where are ye gaun, ye mason lads,
With a' your ladders, lang and hie ?”
“ We gang to herry a corbie's nest,
That wons not far frae Woodhouselee.”

“ Where be ye gaun, ye broken men ?”
Quo' fause Sakelde ; “ come tell to me !”
Now Dickie of Dryhope led that band,
And the never a word o' lear had he.

“ Why trespass ye on the English side ?
Row-footed outlaws, stand !” quo' he ;
The never a word had Dickie to say,
Sae he thrust his lance thro' his fause bodie.

Then on we held to Carlisle toun,
And at Staneshaw-bank the Eden we cross'd ;
The water was great and meikle of spait,
But the nevir a horse nor man we lost.

And when we reached the Staneshaw-bank,
The wind was rising loud and hie :
And there the laird garr'd leave our steeds,
For fear that they should stamp and nie.

And when we left the Staneshaw-bank,
The wind began full loud to blaw ;
But 'twas wind and weet, and fire and sleet,
When we came beneath the castle wa'.

We crept on knees, and held our breath,
Till we placed the ladders against the wa' ;
And sae ready was Buccleuch himsell
To mount the first, before us a'.

He has ta'en the watchman by the throat,
He flung him down upon the lead—
“ Had there not been peace between our land,
Upon the other side thou hadst gaed !”

“ Now sound out, trumpets !” quo' Buccleuch ;
“ Let's waken lord Scrope, right merrilie !”
Then loud the warden's trumpet blew—
O whae dare meddle wi' me ?”

Then speedilie to work we gaed,
And raised the slogan ane and a',
And cut a hole thro' a sheet of lead,
And so we wan to the castle ha'.

They thought King James and a' his men
Had won the house with bow and spear;
It was but twenty Scots and ten,
That put a thousand in sic a stear!

Wi' coulters, and wi' fore-hammers,
We garr'd the bars bang merrilie,
Untill we cam to the inner prison,
Where Willie o' Kinmont he did lie.

And when we cam to the lower prison,
Where Willie o' Kinmont he did lie—
“O sleep ye, wake ye, Kinmont Willie,
Upon the morn that thou's to die?”

“O I sleep saft, and I wake aft;
It's lang since sleeping was fleyed frae me!
Gie my service back to my wife and bairns,
And a' gude fellows that speer for me.”

Then Red Rowan has hente him up,
The starkest man in Teviotdale—
“Abide, abide now, Red Rowan,
Till of my lord Scrope I take farewell.

“Farewell, farewell, my gude lord Scrope!
My gude lord Scrope, farewell!” he cried—
“I'll pay you for my lodging mail,
When first we meet on the border side.”

Then shoulder high, with shout and cry,
We bore him down the ladder lang;
At every stride Red Rowan made,
I wot the Kinmont's airns played clang!

“ O mony a time,” quo’ Kinmont Willie,
“ I have ridden horse baith wild and wood ;
But a rougher beast than Red Rowan,
I ween my legs have ne’er bestrode.

“ And mony a time,” quo’ Kinmont Willie,
“ I’ve pricked a horse out oure the furs ;
But since the day I backed a steed,
I never wore sic cumbrous spurs !”

We scarce had won the Staneshaw-bank,
When a’ the Carlisle bells were rung,
And a thousand men in horse and foot,
Cam wi’ the keen lord Scrope along.

Buccleuch has turned to Eden water,
Even where it flow’d frae bank to brim,
And he has plunged in wi’ a’ his band.
And safely swam them thro’ the stream.

He turned him on the other side,
And at lord Scrope his glove flung he—
“ If ye like na my visit in merry England,
In fair Scotland come visit me !”

All sore astonished stood lord Scrope,
He stood as still as rock or stane ;
He scarcely dared to trew his eyes,
When thro’ the water they had gane.

“ He is either himself a devil frae hell,
Or else his mother a witch maun be ;
I wad na have ridden that wan water,
For a’ the gowd in Christentie.”

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